

the circle

{ spring issue - two thousand seven }



the circle

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Riley Tant

Graphic Designer

Joshua Swindle

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Caitlin Kearns, Daniel Milton

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Nathan Wagner, Patrick Weatherly

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Greg Kramer, Amanda Gauntt, Eva Harmon, Victoria Johnson

ABOUT THE CIRCLE

The Circle is Auburn University's creative interest magazine. It serves as a forum for the artists, writers, photographers, and designers of Auburn University. Our goal is that this publication will accurately represent the diverse talents and abilities of the Auburn community. The Auburn Circle is free to all students. Issues are published once every fall and spring. Students from all majors, alumni, faculty, staff, and supporters of Auburn University are invited to submit to The Circle. The Auburn Circle is one of ten Student Activity Projects annually receiving student activity fee allocations and coordinated through the Office of the Dean of Students.



editor's letter

Riley Tant

This past Christmas while I was visiting the Museum of Modern Art in New York, it occurred to me how many different types of creativity exist. After seeing "Starry Night" by Vincent Van Gogh, and several original paintings by Jackson Pollock, I realized how priceless these works were, and I thought about how significantly they have impacted history.

This realization made me proud to be a part of a publication that promotes and encourages creativity, not just through art, but in all different types of outlets.

This year we have tried to encompass all of the different creative outlets available on Auburn's campus. Everything from literature, art, design and architecture.

Thank you to every person who submitted this year, and to all of the supporters of *The Circle*. I also ask for your continued support of next year's staff as they continue to expand and improve *The Circle*.

At the beginning of the semester, our staff set a high goal of continuing to improve the quality of the magazine and the quality of the work selected. They worked hard to reach this goal and I am confident that it was met and exceeded.

Thank you for all the positive feed back we received for the fall issue. It was not only encouraging, but motivating as well for us to create an even greater issue for spring.

Thank you to my great staff! It has been so much fun to work with everyone, and I hope the returning staff members will continue to work hard to make next year's issues even greater!

Thank you to Dafni Greene and Lisa Lee for always being supportive and encouraging.

Thank you to my wonderful family for always being my biggest support system.

I'm proud to present my second and final issue of *The Circle* as the Editor-in-Chief.

Enjoy!

The Circle Staff



Chelsea Standifer, Art
Senior Psychology

"The air was soft, the stars so fine, the
promise of every cobbled alley so great."
Jack Kerouac



Elizabeth Gray, Publicity
Junior, Communication
Atlanta, Georgia

"Real joy comes not from ease or riches or
from the praise of men, but from doing some-
thing worthwhile." Sir Wilfred Grenfell

Amanda Zambrano, Publicity
Sophomore, Public Relations
Tampa, Florida

"You're killing me, Smalls"



Maria Toro, Publicity
Junior, Communication
Marietta, Georgia

"Eventually all the pieces fall into place;
until then...laugh at the confusion, live for
the moment, and know that everything
happens for a reason."

Abbie Basten, Fiction
International Trade/Spanish
Charleston, South Carolina

"As the world is ending, I'm always glad to
be entertained for a few moments. The best
way to do that is with music." Kurt Vonnegut



Kendra Carter, Non-Fiction
Junior, Journalism



Kaitlin Burns, Art
Junior, French and Spanish
Vestavia Hills, Alabama

"If you can't create physical life, you find a life
force. If that's in music, that's in music. I started
to find this deep, primitive rhythm, and I started
to move to it. And I held hands with sorrow, and I
danced with her, and we giggled a bit." Tori Amos



Katy Donaldson, Poetry
Sophomore, Journalism
Birmingham, Alabama

"True heroism is not the urge to surpass
others at whatever cost, but the urge
to serve others at whatever cost."

Caitlin Kearns, Poetry
Freshman, Pre-veterinary student
Union Beach, New Jersey

"Dreaming permits each and every one
of us to be quietly and safely insane ev-
ery night of our lives." ~ William Dement



Amy Steinkampf, Art
Freshman, Mathematics



Amanda Gauntt, Photography
Junior, Psychology
Lawrenceville, Georgia

"It is the mark of an educated mind to
be able to entertain a thought without
accepting it." Aristotle



Courtney Harper, Fashion
Senior
Apparel Merchandising, Design, and
Production Management
Mountain Brook, Alabama

"A smile is an indication of a happy
heart, and when you smile it changes
your perception." Goldie Hawn

Lauren English, Graphic Design
Sophomore, Graphic Design
Decatur, Alabama

"A man who does not think for himself does not think at all." Oscar Wilde



Greg Kramer, Photography
Junior, Aerospace Engineering
Lake Charles, LA

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." Winston Churchill



Laurel Kostakis, Fashion
Freshman, Pre-Med, Exercise Science



Lauren Davidson, Fashion
Freshmen, Elementary Education



Abigail Moeller, Fashion
Senior, French and
Fashion Merchandising



Kim Calabro, Non-Fiction
Journalism, Junior
Savannah, Georgia
"That's what she said." -Michael Scott



Danielle Ward, Fashion
Senior, Apparel Merchandising
Birmingham, Alabama
"In order to be irreplaceable one must also be different." Coco Chanel



Ashley Riddle ,Fashion
Junior, Consumer Affairs



Amy LaRue, Fiction Editor
Junior, English
Scottsboro, Alabama

"Here is my secret: It's quite simple: One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes." Antoine De Saint-Exupery



Bryn Culpepper, Fiction
Sophomore, Exercise Science
Mobile, Alabama
"If anything can go wrong, it will." Murphy's Law



Ellison Langford, Fiction
Freshman, Journalism



Dana Jaffe, Non-Fiction
Senior, Journalism



Megan Saggadieh, Art
Senior, English



The Circle Staff

Patrick Weatherly, Fiction
Senior, English

"I just like to smile, smiling is my favorite!" Buddy the Elf



Sarah Adams, Non-Fiction
Freshman, Industrial Design



Vicki Johnson, Photography
Freshman, Journalism
Homewood, Alabama

"Experience is one thing you can't get for nothing." Oscar Wilde

Daniel Milton, Poetry
Senior, English

"The true Christian is the true citizen, lofty of purpose, resolute in endeavor, ready for a hero's deeds, but never looking down on his task because it is cast in the day of small things" Theodore Roosevelt



Nathan Wagner, Fiction
Senior, English
Alpharetta, Georgia

"Nothing worth knowing can be understood with the mind." Woody Allen



Tim Byrd, Poetry
Junior, English



Whitney Cowart, Publicity
Junior, Public Relations



Carrollton, Georgia
"Your life is what your thoughts make it" Marcus Aurelius



Jennie Bodenhamer
Publicity
Sophomore, Spanish

Vestavia Hills, Alabama

"Be glad of life because it gives you the chance to love, to work, to play, and to look up at the stars." Henry Van Dyke



Megan Howell, Art
Senior, Interior Design



Valerie Virciglio, Nonfiction
Senior, English
Vestavia Hills, Alabama
"Some people go to priests; others to poetry; I to my friends." Virginia Woolf



Eve Harmon, Photography
Senior, English

Montgomery, Alabama

"Despite everything, I believe that people are really good at heart." Anne Frank



Terran Wilson, Art Editor
Junior, Architecture

Birmingham, Alabama

"And miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep."

Robert Frost



Joshua Swindle, Graphic Designer
Senior graphic design
"If all the animals on the equator were capable of flattery, then Thanksgiving and Halloween would fall on the same day." Danny Ocean



{art}



1



2



3



4

1 *Birthday Flowers*
Daniel Ropoli
Architecture
Sophomore
"I did this drawing for a friend for her birthday. I met her this past summer while spending a month in Korea."

2 *Ship*
Dinithi Iddawela

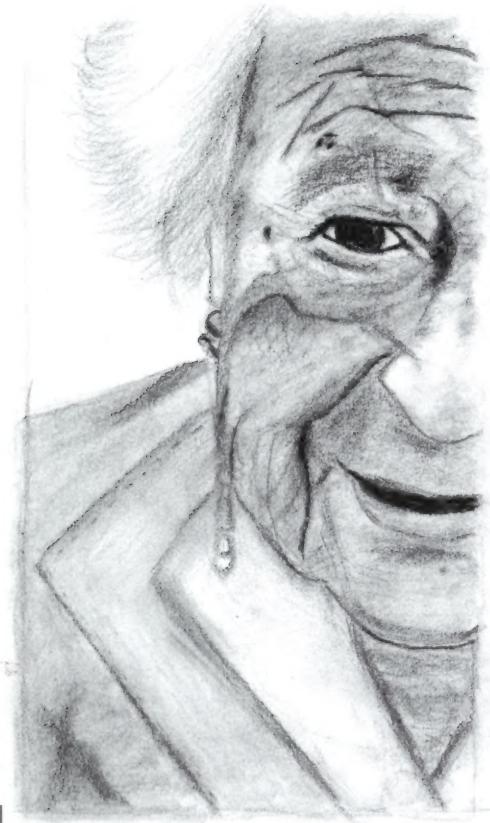
3 *Reverie*
Ed Hall
Architecture
Junior
"Marion, Alabama 1858. Watercolor on Arches."

4 *Alone*
Jenny Starkey
Fine Arts
Senior

5 *Motion #2*
Jenny Starkey
Fine Arts
Senior



5



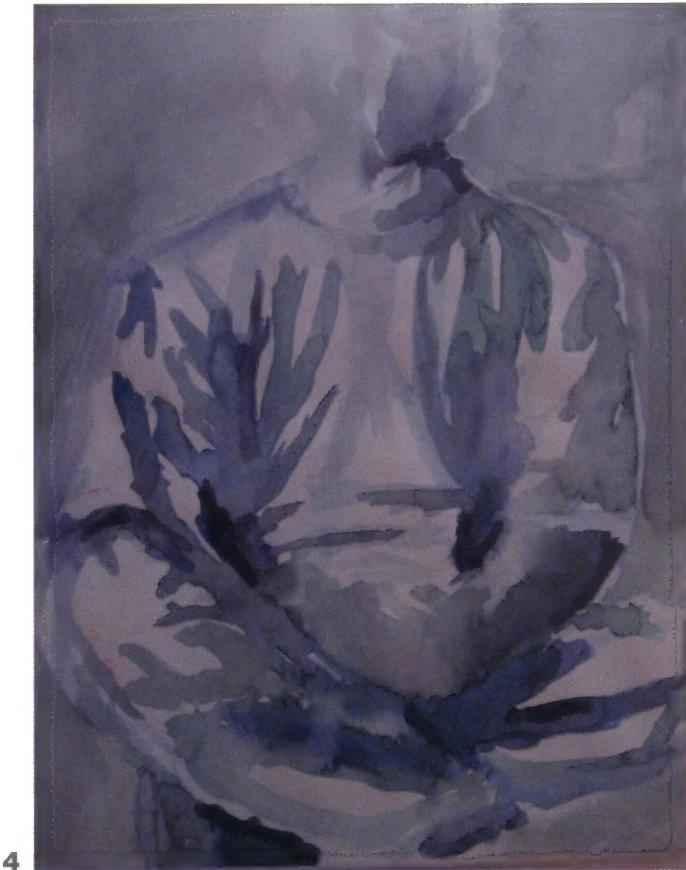
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4

1 *La Vieja*
Haley Pridmore
Spanish International Trade, Senior
"I believe there is a bittersweet beauty to an old woman's face."

2 *Strongly*
Cem Sinan Kayatekin
Architecture, Junior
"I just like contrasting things side by side."

3 *Drop 07*
Evan Forrest
Architecture, Senior
"Detached form creation."

4 *Sitting Duck*
Courtney Harper
Apparel Merchandising, Design, and Production Management, Senior
"Our model for that particular day was one of our classmates. It was interesting to see the different representations of a person that you see every day."

5 *Tree of Life*
John Jozef Veres
Architecture, Junior
"This piece is inspired by a tree at Auburn University's rural architecture studio, and designed for the use in a poster advertising the southern Quad conference for the American Institute of Architecture Students that took place March 16 - 18, 2007."

6 *After*
Keith Cates
Counselor Education, PhD/ Grad Student
"The quiet after the storm and the feeling of desolate calm that comes with exhaustion."



5



6



1

1 *Bob Marley*
Kyle Chapman
Marketing
Senior

2 *Self-Portrait*
Lauren Golen
Art
Senior

"This unique self portrait is about testing one's own balance, structure and confidence. Sometimes it is hard to hold it all together."

3 *Cattywhompas*
Delanne Robertson, Max Cook,
Daniel Cole, Edward May

4 *Self Portrait*
Lauren Henderson
Fine Art
Senior

"I was studying Chuck close when I painted this portrait. I was inspired by his unique way of using the grid to render a persons' face. I tried to develop my own way of using the grid to paint myself."

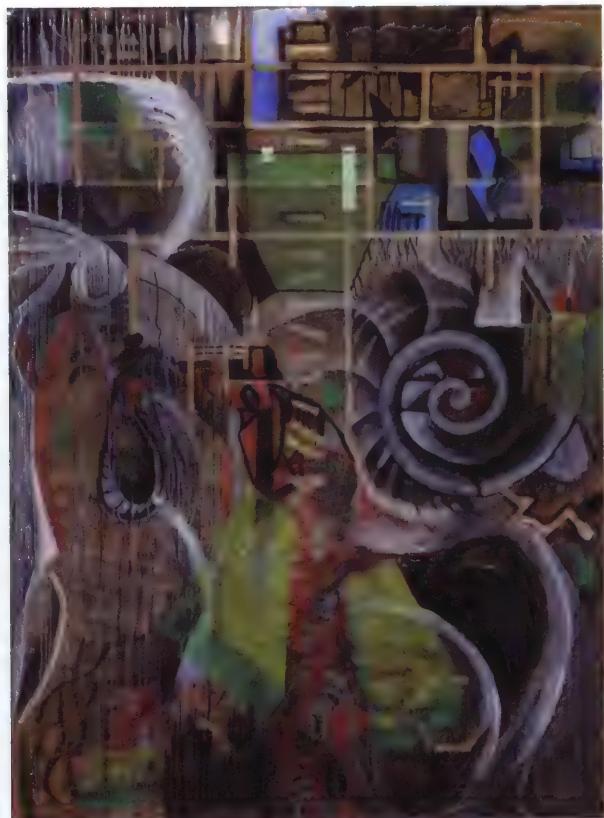
5 *These Are For You*
Lauren Golen
Art
Senior

"A celebration of the beauty of vibrant colors and simple kind gestures."

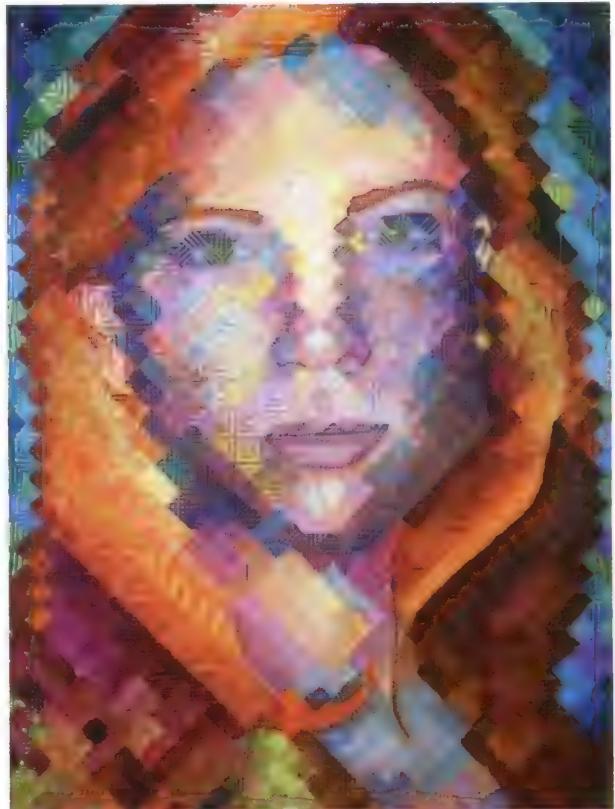
6 *Spot*
Marlena Sigmann
Pre-Graphic Design
Sophomore



2



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6

1 *Self Portrait #2*

Rachel Evans

Fine Art, Senior

"This piece is painted in nailpolish. The use of this unique medium is a statement about the role of femininity in our modern society."

2 *Louis*

Lauren Henderson

Fine Art, Senior

"I took a random piece of cardboard from my house and painted Louis Armstrong on it because I had been listening to him a lot at the time."

3 *Memory, Legacy, Oblivion*

Paul Bryant

Graphic Design, Junior

"The concept for this piece is informed by self-reference and recursion. Specifically, it addresses these phenomena as they're found in the genetic legacy of a person, and in the infinite variety and potential of a person's line. Therefore visually, it abstracts these ideas not as an Ouroboros, but as the sort of infinitely recursive loop found in a video feedback cycle."

4 *The Ballerina*

Caitlyn Sheehy

Fashion Design & Fine Art, Junior

"I applied ink with my finger in order to capture the lighting."

5 *Climate Changes*

Rachael Morgan

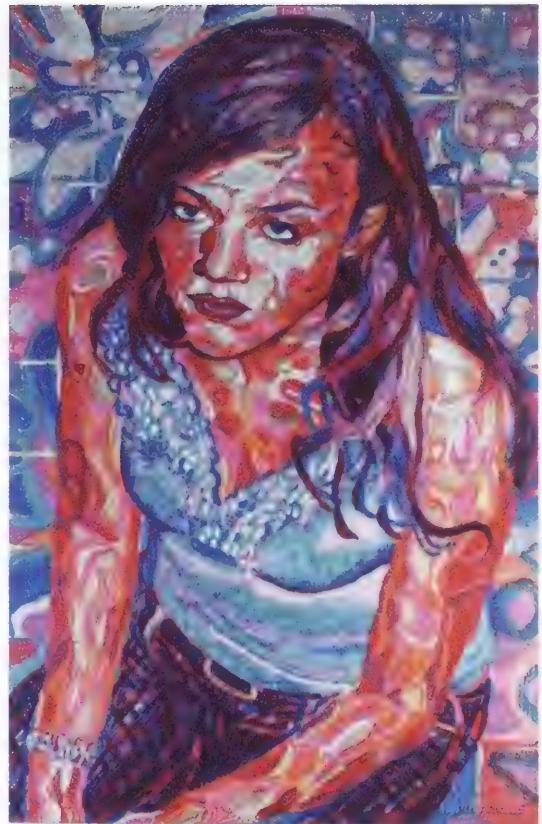
Art and Spanish, Junior

6 *Burnt Toast*

Rachel Evans

Art, Senior

"This piece is created through the use of collage and acrylic paint. It is a statement about the preoccupation with material details and not the large scale problems of society today."



1



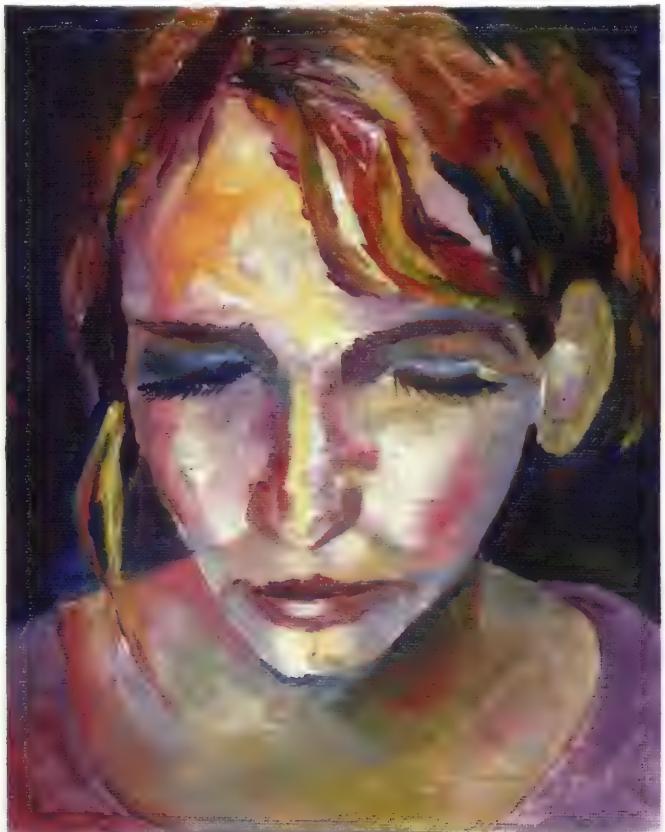
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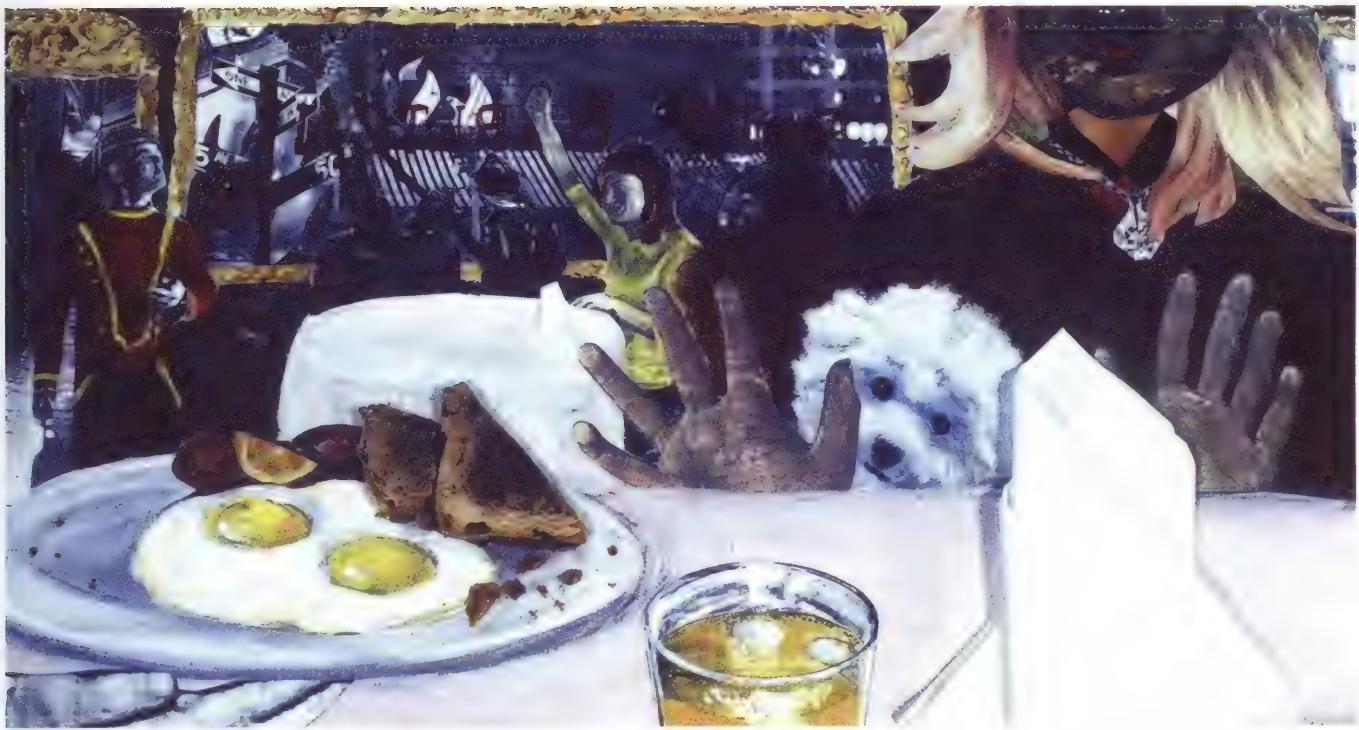
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6

1 Render

Terran Wilson

Architecture

Junior

"An experimentation with rendering techniques and a form (negative space) that could be a floor plan. Executed in graphite."

2 A Picture of Childhood

Lauren McCaul and Keri Ramsey

Interior Design

Junior

"When I saw this picture of the little girl, I fell in love with her adorable, pouty face that seemed to capture the essence of childhood. This is a paper mosaic piece made out of approximately 1400 hand cut 1"x1" paper tiles. It stands about 6' tall and is 5' wide. The inspiration was Mary Cassat's "Sarah in a Green Bonnet" painting. The objective was to recreate the painting by painting each tile with watercolor and color matching the original painting perfectly by color variation."

3 Abstract Mary Cassatt

Liz Geare and Lindsey Ferguson

Interior Design

Junior

"4' x 6' Watercolor enlargement, composed of 1" x 1" solitary color squares."

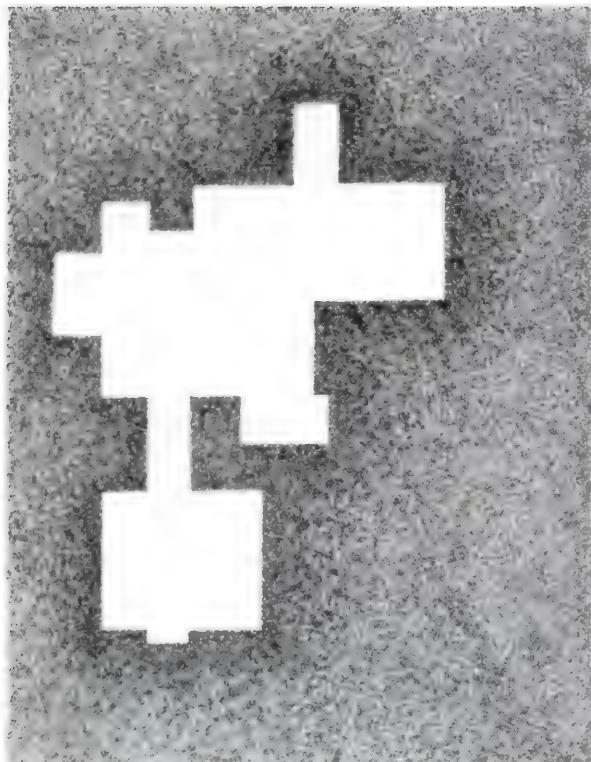
4 Progression

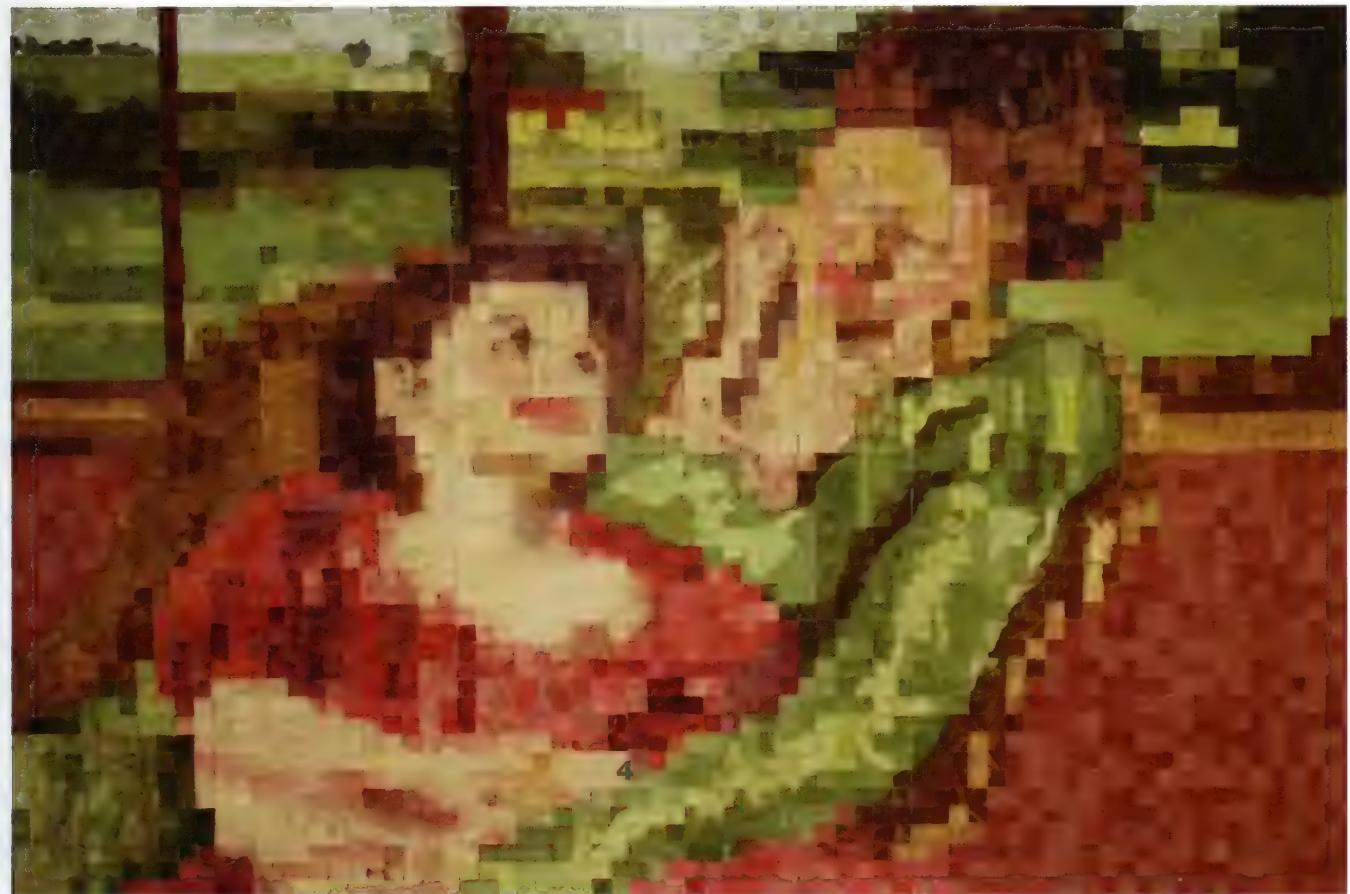
Sarah Rhodes

Fine Art

Sophomore

"This series was done by creating artwork from other artwork. Each piece was done by looking at the last piece rather than the still life. I was working on becoming more free with my movement in each piece and creating more energy."





3



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1 Rev. 12-9

Keith Cates

Counselor Education

PhD/ Grad Student

"Changing from one state to another.
The process of becoming and taking
control of your own transformation."



2 Temporary

Megan O'Neal

Architecture

Freshman

"Everything in our world today seems
to be temporary. Things come and go
so quickly. To me, this rose represents
the temporary state in which we live.
The rose only lasted in physical form
for a brief moment in time. However,
that which the rose symbolizes lasts far
longer than the rose itself."



3 La Petite Maison

Whitney Gilchrist

Interior Design

Junior

"During my time in France last summer, I
stayed with an amazing family in southern
France. I took several pictures of their
house, and then painted one on an 11" x
14 " canvas using a watercolor medium,
and later gave them the painting."



~~Devout~~

There it was, a heap of branches, led leaves, and twigs, sticking out shy from its deformed state. It was gone. What happened? One day it was a vibrant, soaking in the beaming heat there for me to run into. The next cold, lifeless, lying there ready to be...

{literature}

...air to remind me of its
have been mid July but

De Sol Ate His Mind

Reza Minao

from the *Java*

The poems about the experience of

isolation and loss of control

and memory, the self, spirit, and

the divine mind

and the divine mind

Ugh, what a miserable state this is
When I can't make a decision
But I just sit and sway
Letting the nihil have its way
For my soul has been devoured
By liquors secret powers
My soul has eaten itself
In my minds eye I do regret
Replaced by the sol on the outside
In its cold warmth I do confide
But my crush here she says I had too much
Oh, little of these things she knows such
But my friend deserts me, desolate
So that I must fend for my consulate
But little do I care as closer to the fire I dare
Quenching the flames with liquors sweet rains
And underneath speckled shy night
I realize and lament my plight

Angel of the Sepulcher

Anna Elmore

English, Sophomore

"I fell in love with a picture of a weeping angel statue. It was so exquisitely poignant and beautifully mournful that I couldn't help but write about it."

Eternally flung across the altar, *wings wings*,
With drooping stone wings like great cupped palms,
And knotted hair escaping in white wisps,
An alabaster shift with elegant folds *shift*,
Pools at bent knees, knelt for too long;
Ignorant of songbirds perched on wilting shoulders,
And of grass and trees, and the black-clad mourners;
Knowing nothing at all but to weep evermore.

The tip of a wing lies inches away,
Half covered in mud, forever detached.
A spider makes its home in the crook of an elbow;
Nearby a crack makes a web of its own,
Slowly spreading across mottled pale skin,
So cold to the touch, so hard; unyielding.
Eternally flung across a nameless soul;
Ceaselessly weeping, silent and unheard.

Brown Los Angeleno

William Eley

Political Science, Senior

"This work is essentially a documentary piece that sheds light and humanity upon those Los Angelenos that will never find their star on the boulevard"

Jetliners litter
from above
sporadic doses
of red and yellow
as ghetto birds
slice the morning's
June gloom into manna

For tables circled
with English broken
by old-soul tongues
in boots painted
by earth as

Back alley treasure
chests cradle
the poetry of weathered
whispers
of English broken

By the riotous
diamond lane rivers
smoking colored metal
boxes.

His bleeding
hands have
not time to reach
for bandage.

A Writer's Personal

Hari Narayanan

Associate Professor, Computer Science &

"This poem is my attempt at humor, and I wrote it last year while living in Washington DC, where once after spending several amusing hours looking at craigslist DC's strictly platonic message board I felt compelled to write one of my own."

This is no pitiful plea, from a lonely soul stuck in a house
Desperately seeking a companion, paramour or spouse.
Oh no, I am a writer who strives in intentional solitude
To produce a masterpiece, with fearless fortitude.
Such an arduous task, writing fiction
Getting dialog on paper, with the right diction.
Not to mention a truthful memoir
Impossible not to embellish, events in that boudoir!
Or maybe it is poetry that floats your boat,
Saving sonnets in pockets of your coat.
Whatever it is, if you write it
And feel like on occasion you want to share it
Call it destiny or foretelling fate,
But surely it is time for us to meet.
Platonic? Certainly! Married? All right!
All that matters is that you write.
Yes indeed, I am looking for one who writes
In private or published, to chat over a bite
Of Italian biscotti? Fine;
Even a glass of ruby red wine.
For constructive critique and mutual support,
If you're an author seeking such rapport
With a kindred spirit, a likeminded soul,
While munching salad from a bowl;
Perhaps to discuss the latest book,
The fall from grace of a plagiarist.
All topics welcome, even the carnal,
Though I draw the line at banter just banal.
So do let me ask, are you an author?
Sorry to be picky, I know, such a bother!
But if you do revel in writing's thrills
Even when it won't pay your bills,
Drop me an email to meet at Starbucks
To engage in exchange of literary thoughts,
Savoring the aroma of beans roasted to perfection,
Sharing bites of a tempting chocolate confection.

Alabama

Katy Donaldson

Journalism, Sophomore

"This is a snapshot of what summers were like with my grandfather."

My grandfather and I
sit on the porch in the wicker chairs.
Darkness slowly drowns
the pink twilight,
as fireflies begin to peep out
among the bushes,
and lazily make their trip
to the leafy tree tops.
Moths flutter above our heads,
the only sound
that penetrates the humid summer air.

We play Parcheesi,
he sees a move I don't,
and a grin pushes his bifocals
up, and down again,
like a ship
on gentle waves.
I move the piece
and take the win.
His grin grows wider
and we move on to Chinese Checkers.

Moon Bone

Jacob Smith

Undeclared, Sophomore

I wrote this poem after a discussion with friends about a moon shown in *HUMAN ODYSSEY*. In this poem I presented my own thoughts and reactions to both the moon and the discussion.

deep analysis
reveals distinct, intentional notation
on sharpened bone
most likely work of
a neanderthal
it's some paleolithic
human
change from circles
to circle halves
to tiny crescents
groups of seven
moon phases
deep analysis
says its moon phases

i believe it
it's within the realm
of reality
i have a calendar
why couldn't he?
hell, it's beautiful
an eternal optimist
in an unforgiving, meaningless world
but my friends
call it bull
some random
bone scientists
want to be significant
made up for intellectual bliss
sure isn't art they say
just a random, unimportant
way to spend time
poking holes in a bone

Passed Paradigms.

Chelsea Cloud

Political Science, Junior

*Keepsake rings, aren't the
only things your mother
will import to you.*

Mother said to be grateful
For what you have
Could soon be lost,
To a boy who thinks he's a man
As grandmother put it.
In no uncertain terms.
When my favorite way to write is with tears
And controversy
I don't like dark rooms either
Or that being alone thing,
Very scary.
Whats worse is your presence,
An unspoken demand for the usual.
It disheartens me.

Housing Development

Jacob Smith

Undeclared, Sophomore

*"I wrote this poem while waiting
in a courtyard of a local housing
development for my "little brother"
and "little sister." The title--while
it is an accurate description of
where I was--is meant to be ironic,
expressing a cold, politically correct view
of an area that is paradoxically both
full of life and full of emptiness."*

I wasn't at my assigned place
uncomfortable, but not angst
the courtyard was dirt with
patches of grass and scattered
toys: a football, a plastic car
it was fall and the leaves
were yellows and browns
a layer had fallen no one
bothered to rake them up
little clusters on porches
smoking, talking, leaning
back in cheap lawn chairs
the radio booms of rap and
the kid standing next to me
whistles, but not the same
song as the lady whose
incantations disturb the
space as her body convulses
into a rhythmic dance
the courtyard is holy ground
a few tread across it but
none stand and remain
the porch across from me
is empty door shut windows
covered I stare waiting

Gods in Twilight

Brad Acton

ENGL/HIST Senior

"Sometimes our search for meaning and value can leave us broken and vulnerable. It is in these moments and our experiences of helplessness where we're forced to submit to a purpose higher than ourselves. This poem is a representation of such a moment, where one exchanges their finite 'Gods' in lieu of recognizing the infinite value placed in them by a Creator."

Sails slide through the crystal
Perfection of untouched ages,
And all of mankind stares
Sighs into the hearts of the
Fairer sex.

Blemished with beliefs of lost hopes,
All the ways are dark with misty
Beginnings, tunnels endless with
Themselves, caught up in the trouble
Of going nowhere.

Steps fall in the snowy realm
Of where we walk, wondering when
We began and seeing all the footfalls
Disappear behind us as I reach
For your hand.

The sky passes us over, blending
With every lunar crescent lost in
The shadows of twilight, and
Far below I glance over to where
You used to be.

In the quaking tremors of the future
There may yet reside a remnant of hope
And the blessing of farewells still hidden
By our trespasses, but the day is still young
With its depravity.

For now, I will rage into the
Forever and scream shades over
The light of my dreams, dashing
Myself to pieces where I saw the
Gods fall.

Rainclouds

Brad Acton

ENGL/HIST Senior

*"We all lose the people we love.
It is a common trait of the human
condition that we all experience.
The infinite value of certain people
I know lead me to moments like the
one expressed in this poem, where
the greatest fear I imagine would be
to lose the people that I love."*

I am as before; I am as I always was.
This is my keeping, my lot, my place
In the evanescent tendencies of our world
Where I play out my tomorrows in some
Dreamlike escapade where heroes wish
They were me.

This is my love, my hope, my forever,
Only mentioned in passing when all the
Silence of the outside seeps into the crevices
We left open for the light, never knowing
The twilight could find itself in the moments
When you left.

This is my madness, my disease, my infinity,
Loosed in its coils upon the firmament
When it grows dark under the hollow gaze
Of a reflecting rock, hung brilliantly so we
Would wonder what He was thinking in those
First moments.

This is my self, my sorrow, my yesterday,
Lost in a memory I've already forgotten,
One which I never took the trouble to find again.
Thunder calls out in the moist grey, and when
I reach out over the miles, rain splinters her cries
On broken clouds.

This is my song, my gift, my luckiest,
A torn relic of the aesthetic given as a
Reminder of everything I could have been.
There are faces smiling back from those days
And if I betray myself for maybe an instant,
I'll see them again.

This is my station, my goodbye, my farewell,
Fleeing over the lost minutes and wailing in the
Shadows of where I left you. It was in the rain,
I said, It was in the rain. But you left, anyway,
Leaving me silhouettes of hands as the thunder came
Calling again.

Let us Pray

Karen Haze

This is a poem that I wrote entitled "Let us Pray". I wrote it at work, it was a better or, being people bring cancer, gastritis, and it sort of Josephine, a satirical look at the sanctity of sex, and because it is considered a taboo, it is a good idea. I guess it's making an wedge. It kinda goes from, you know, something to, and to, well.

Karen
Haze

The First Song To Bill Collins

/by Katy Donaldson
Journalism, Sophomore

"This was written as a response
to Billy Collin's poem "The First Dream"
first person
friendship

The breeze allows the leaves to dance
in the autumn sun, and as I gaze into the
crystal blue I begin to think about the
first person to sing, how strangely his
friends must have looked at him

as they trudged around the cave
swinging their clubs,
for this was before the advancement
of weaponry.

He might have gone off by himself,
ambling along a forest stream,
discovering this strange noise escaping
his throat.

He had made a sound,
without speaking or even meaning to speak.
It was almost like the birds that flew in the air,
That had always bothered him.

Then again, the first song could have come
from a woman, and she might have done
the same thing, getting strange stares from
her sisters, and running off into the woods,
bursting with curious excitement,

but her song would be clear and smooth,
and it would come from lovely lips,
making her seem immortal,
and if he were watching,

he might have gone down as the first person
to ever fall in love with the joy
of another.

a breath between us
suspended in time
bridges our souls
come closer

your mouth my sanctuary
it tastes of godless divinity
of angels without wings
and rainbows in dark corners

I search it for answers
will you bathe me, in my ignorance?
my dirty incompetence laid before you?
upon your altar of marble skin?

Your mouth is my confessional
my tongue is the penitent,
searching for forgiveness
I gasp into you my act of contrition

you answer with breaths
that stutter scriptures,
hymns sung to the beats
of our hearts' duet

fingers interlaced we pray
and sing our requiem for innocence
its bittersweet departure our scarlet letter
gone to heaven upon wings of white satin

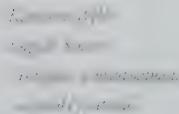
I enter you, moaning my soft aria
your refrain heaven's trumpet
playing as we sway in our spiritual dance
and eat our forbidden fruits with trembling hands

upon this table of sinful linen,
we unite in our blasphemy
I hold you close, my frail goddess
encompassing you with my inanity

our hymn crescendos
racing alongside our flagellations
towards a hellish Galilee
we collapse into eachother

Your visage hovers before me,
an ethereal mist, of gossamer and dreams
your eyes overtake me as our lips meet
and I drown in your Pandemonic Paradise
Salve, Salvation. Hosanna

Oatmeal



Oatmeal is only oatmeal
when it is plain.
Strawberry, peach, cinnamon and apple
have a tendency to steep into each grain,
forcing the oats to take on fruit flavor.
Oatmeal ought to taste oaty.

The bowl should be filled
with sturdy lumps.
Not sloshing the way grits do.
Not shaking the way pudding does.
Quivering Quaker Oats sounds gross.

As Long As I Have Jazz To Fill My Night

Keith Beard

Secondary Education - English, Senior

*"This poem is a dedication to the great genre
of music, Jazz, and the people it has inspired."*

Jazz from G's sax keeps my boot on beat
With songs written some fifty years ago
By men who worked by day in hot, wet heat
Who could release their souls with rhythms they know.
Tonight is special: my lady quit this Grinch.
She was a dog, no less, a hag, a crone,
Good for nothing, my old fat wretched wench.
My bags all packed for home I dub alone
On streets that wait to gulp down life oppressed
By girls who dare to seek to dress with flair.
But homeless streets must wait on love, I confess.
My heart is struck by sounds made live in air.
No woman, no strife, no plight can take my life.
As long as I have Jazz to fill my night.

Magic

By Amy La Rue

English, junior

This story is loosely based on some adventures one of my childhood friends and I had. I wrote it as a fiction writing assignment.

"Mrs. Bridgeman?"

The intercom in our third-grade classroom sounded far away, almost like it was at the other end of a long dark tunnel. I knew what was coming next, so I slid the leather bound book under the sweater that rested on top of my desk.

"Could you send Darcy Richards to the principal's office?"

I froze at my desk. My stomach jumped into my throat; the whole class turned and looked and made that stupid noise when you know someone's in trouble. I knew I had to do something: blink, move, speak, breathe, anything. Instead, I just sat there, staring.

"DARCY."

I could tell Mrs. Bridgeman was mad because she used her third-time tone.

Slowly I exhaled and turned to look at Janie, but as soon as I saw her eyes, she looked away. She was actually going to let me take all the blame. The cat, the book, the whole thing was her idea; it was all hers. Even though I hoped it would work, I didn't want to be proven wrong so I told her it would never work.

I stood up and walked to the door with my head down. I just knew if I looked at anyone, the tears in my eyes would start down my cheeks.

"Do I need a hall pass?" My voice was shaky and my hand was shaking as I turned the doorknob.

Mrs. Bridgeman silently flicked her wrist towards me as the hall pass sliced through the air. The hall smelled like a dungeon, like stale air and wet mold. The walk gave me time to focus on my defense: "I promise I didn't do it" or "the fifth graders made me, they said I'd never eat a peaceful lunch again" or "there was a ghost and he said if I brought it with me, he wouldn't haunt me" but nothing seemed good enough. I wasn't prepared; I never get in trouble.

"Darcy, just sit in one of those green chairs and wait for Mrs. Brandt to call for you."

Miss Stacy always seemed so happy to sit behind the desk and answer the phone. Her blonde hair was twisted into a bun like the ballerina in my music box. She sat there tapping her long pink fingernails on the wooden desktop while I waited. My throat was dry and all I could think about was that the ticking of the clock and Stacy's nails were ticking at different times and with all the bad excuses repeating themselves in my head, I felt like I might scream any second.

Ever since Mr. Sevens left and Mrs. Brandt had become the new principal of the elementary school, I had heard nothing but horrifying things about the principal's office. They said she had a paddle as big as a math book and that her office smelled like feet and burnt toast, that she always looked you right in the eye and could tell if you were lying, and she was a witch—the bad kind.

Finally, Mrs. Brandt came out and led me into her office. I felt like I was entering a room I wasn't supposed to be in, like when Mary finds the key to the secret garden and goes in for the first time. Everything looked so magical and important but scary at the same time. I couldn't focus; all I could think about were all the books on the shelves behind her and the old pictures in the frames on the wall and the fish tank with what seemed like hundreds of fish and the big glass globe sitting on her desk that could probably see the future.

"Darcy, you can sit there and begin by telling me why you think you're here." Mrs. Brandt

spoke softly but looked old and stern.

I was beginning to wonder why everyone was so scared of coming here; it seemed like a perfect place to be sent to me. So, I nodded and accepted the small paper cup full of water and decided to start from the beginning.

"Well, you see Mrs. Brandt, Janie and I have been friends, not just friends, but best friends since she told me she liked my dress on the first day of school in the second grade. Her mom is a witch, but the good kind. They have tons of spell books in their library, and their house is like 100 years old and the floors creak and there are bats i—"

"Dar—"

"in the attic. I love going over there; it's always an adventure. And my mo—"

"Darcy. Stop. I need you to tell me about today. How did the cat get into your book satchel?"

"Well, I was getting to that, but you cut me o..."

I could tell then that it was the wrong thing to say, but it was too late.

"Now Darcy, I think that is enough. Tell me how that cat got into your book satchel this instant."

Her voice had changed. She was not interested in the entire history of what had led to the events of that morning, but I hadn't had enough time to think of a way to tell the story without getting Janie in trouble too. I quickly replayed the whole day over in my head. Janie said all I had to do was read the words three times and shake pepper on the cat's ear and the cat would fly; she said she and her mom had done it yesterday. So, I put all the needed ingredients: spell book, pepper, and cat in my book bag to try it again after lunch. I was determined to do it; if she could then so could I. But I couldn't tell Mrs. Brandt that; she'd never believe it.

"This office is amazing. I never knew you had so many books. I love to read. My mom says if I don't stop reading all these books, I won't be able to keep my imagination from never bringing me back to real life. Sometime could I borrow some or...maybe you...could read some of them...to me?" The end of my request trailed off into the singsong whine of a three-year-old, but she wasn't buying it. Her eyes stayed focused on mine, and I tried to think of something that would make the shaky feeling in my stomach go away. I saw that there was nothing more I could do. So I started to tell her everything. "I was...well, we..." I couldn't do it; she would know I believed in it. I would look like a baby. I couldn't risk it; I had to grow up.

"When Mom took me to Janie's this morning before school, we found the kitten hiding under the leaf pile in her front yard. When she went inside to get her lunchbox so we could walk to school, I put the kitten in my book bag so we wouldn't lose her."

Then it was over. I would have to stay in after school detention for a week and write a letter to Mrs. Bridgeman apologizing for the disruption the kitten caused to class and promise never to bring a cat to school in my book bag again.

Janie met me at the water fountain after lunch. She asked what the principal's office was like and I told her about Miss Stacy's pink nails, the books, the fish, and the magic globe; but I didn't tell her I was afraid to tell Mrs. Brandt I believed I could make Agatha fly. She didn't thank me, but I knew she was happy I hadn't told that putting Agatha in my book bag was her idea. She said we could try again tomorrow, but somehow I knew that

the magic was gone.

The Violet Hour

S.J. Brooks English/Creative Writing and Philosophy

"I wonder how characters exist within authors before they've been fully created, and how those skeletons exist within us all."

So my friend Jay asks me to meet him at this bar downtown. It's a rainy, sleetin' night. I been in a bad mood all day; don't really feel like going out, but what the hell, what else am I going to do on Tuesday night? It'll be good for me to get out of my pad. I'm new to New England, though I've known Jay for a long time, and nothing feels like home. This guy, Holden, is supposed to meet up with us later, and Jay's bringing along his friend, Scott, to see if he can keep up with us.

Jay gave me the address yesterday afternoon over the phone. I get to the place and it looks nice: it looks nice, but it's not that nice. There's a blue sign out front: Mozambique Café: done up with dark and light blue neon and the edges of the letters swirl a little violet.

I see them through the window. I walk in and tell the old Indian doorman that I'm here for the party sitting in the corner. He pats me on the shoulder and says well go right in please sir. Jay and his friend have a round corner table close to the bar and there's a little lamp sitting against the wall glowing golden.

"How's it going," I say to Jay.

"Good, good. And you my friend?"

"I'm okay. You must be Scott."

This guy Scott stands up, shakes my hand. He's got a firm grip. His hair's all slicked-back and he's wearing a nice suit, though it's not as nice as Jay's. I'm wearing a tee shirt and a pair of blue jeans under my overcoat.

"So what are we drinking tonight, fellas?" I say.

They hold up their glasses.

"That rum?"

"Brandy," Scott says with a nod. "Best thing for a writer, besides absinthe and sleep." I sit down across from Jay, Scott to my right. I order a beer, Bass, and the bartender says it'll be right up.

"So how did you two meet?" I say.

"Well, it's the damndest thing, really," Jay says. "I feel like I've known Scott all my life, and he told me the same thing when we met at my house a few nights ago."

"It was the best party in town that night," Scott says. "Damn fine champagne." He takes a sip of his brandy and I can hear him slurping it up through his lips, between his teeth. My beer comes in a frosty mug and I take a swill.

"You seem a little down tonight, Jay," I say.

"Well, I just wanted to get out and do something. She still hasn't come back, ever since I last saw you."

"That one brat you were telling me about?"

He looks at me funny. "She's not a brat," he says.

"Oh, pardon me," I say, trying to be good-humored. He pauses for a second, pulls his cuffs down around his wrists, and continues.

"But yes, it is her that I'm referring to. After she left the other night, I kept expecting her to come back, but she never did."

"What's her name?"

"Zelda," Jay says.

"Like Legend of Zelda?" I ask.

"What?"

"Never mind."

"I knew a Zelda once," Scott says. His complexion is very pale, and he's already finished with his brandy. He motions for the waitress and orders another one. "But I lost her a long time ago. I don't want you to do the same, Jay," he says. "Don't want you to end up like me." He says this very somberly. I think, and my spirits begin to die a bit, so I finish my beer and order another one from the waitress.

Jay does away with his brandy. "So what are they teaching you in that graduate

school these days?" he says. When the waitress comes back, she asks if he wants another. He shakes his head, moves his hand from side to side.

"Well, we're pretty much reading literature."

"And you pay to read literature?"

"Well no, not exactly, but—"

"Ah. The 'but' is what interests me."

"Lay off him," Scott says. "I was in school once myself."

"It's ok," I say. I guess Scott doesn't realize how long I've known Jay. But somehow, I don't feel I've known him much longer than Scott tonight. "He's got a point. I guess I wouldn't get around to reading as much if I wasn't in school. Everybody's getting a Master's degree these days, you know."

"Why wouldn't you get around to reading?" Jay says. "I've read all my life because I love it."

I don't say anything. Scott looks over at Jay, then at me.

"You've got a point," I say. "I was thinking, it's really strange how the whole artist-teacher-academe-America thing works." I sip some beer. It's cold, but warm in my stomach. The day begins to lighten like a sunrise, and I realize there's no place I'd rather be right now than sitting here talking with these two schmucks. "I mean, let's say the artist creates a work of art, then 200 years later, a grad student like me takes some minute part of it and concentrates on it when the artist might have really just thought about it for a nanosecond. The teacher-to-be then starts writing a paper, takes some dusty old literary criticism written by McHorton, Edwards, and McGill from the 1970s and inserts about two paragraphs of his own thought there at the end. Then the school gives him a piece of paper and calls him a doctor and then all the new doctors start forming the new literary cannon, know what I mean?"

Scott nods, subtly. Jay doesn't move. "Go on," he says. "What do you mean, old sport?"

"Well, what I mean was that I was in this record shop the other day in the village, and I go in to re-buy Blonde on Blonde and there's a poseable Vincent Van Gogh action figure sitting on a shelf that has removable heads and a little attachable easel. This action figure is just sitting there with an \$8.99 sticker on it and a little trade mark symbol. Isn't there something wrong with how that can exist?"

"But how does anything exist, old sport?" Jay says. "If it isn't in your heart."

"Oh, can the romantic crap for a night," I say. "Don't you see what I mean?"

"I think so," Scott says. "I'm not sure how it's related to academia but I think so."

"I mean, it's weird for artists to create works of art, and then in some unknown, unforeseeable future, for companies to be building action figures with removable heads going down the assembly line and for a bunch of teachers to be basically making a living parasitizing their works of art, raising a family, little Suzie and Bobbie Jo, and teaching classes with these artists' works, after the artist died miserably maybe; let's say nothing's been left of him in the ground for 200 years, even. "Thanks very much, Vincent."

"That's just how it works," Scott says. "At least that's left: the work is left. At least the art is exposed to the students that way. Or the students to the art, rather. Doesn't have to make sense to us."

"Yes, Scott, but they could find it on their own if they looked for it," Jay says. "They don't need it spoon fed to them. Besides, they need to be out there striving for something, not just sitting around in a class room, listening to whatever their teachers think."

Scott sighs. "I guess you've got a point, the both of you," he says. "But there's nothing we can do to change it." He finishes another brandy. "What should be the future of art? Would you rather it drifted off to some Platonic realm when it's complete?"

"I don't know," I say. "That action figure really got to me, though. The whole deal really gets to me."

"I guess I would feel a bit ill at ease if there was a trade mark symbol next to my name," Jay says.

"Amen," I say. "What gives them the right?"

I look around the bar. There's a line of people going all the way down, sitting elbow to elbow, and I wonder if there's just one of them that's saying anything worth listening to. Jay looks at the lamp, points at the golden light. "Something seems odd about this light," he says.

"Would you prefer a different color?" Scott says.

Jay looks at him, puzzled. "Perhaps so." He keeps looking into the light, then turns his head back towards us.

"So when's this Holden guy going to show?" Scott says.

"You never know with him," I say.

"Never mind him," Jay says. There are dark wrinkles under his eyes. Still, he looks like he feels better than Scott, somehow. A little time passes and we don't really say anything much. We just keep ordering drinks and shut the hell up for a few minutes.

"Say, what if we went to Holden's apartment?" I say. "Cut loose. Just surprise him, you know?"

"Good idea," Scott says. "I'd be interested to meet this Holden character."

"He don't live far from here," I say. "Let's go."

"Oh, okay," Jay says.

We walk out of Mozambique Café and onto the street, walk a few feet under an awning, and into the sleet. The violet light shines off the road. "Do you want me to send for my car?" Jay says.

"No," Scott and I say simultaneously.

"It's not far," I say. "Come on, live a little."

"I do live, old sport," Jay says.

"I know you do," I say.

We walk five blocks south, the sleet misting our ears and jackets, to the block where 156th Street turns into Delphi Road. Holden's window is the only one lit on this side. I recognize it because of the flowers on the windowsill. "This is it," I say. I throw a pebble up at the window; it hits, then bounces back down. The window slams open and echoes off the hotel across the road.

"What do you want?" Holden says, looking down from above.

"You stood up," Jay says.

"Yeah, what are you doing up there?" I say.

"I didn't feel like going out tonight. Feel crummy."

"What's the matter, you old homebody?" Jay says.

"Got a letter from my sister. She's got a boyfriend now. Anyway, I don't feel worth a hit."

"I've got a friend down here that I want you to meet," Jay says.

"Hey, I'm real sorry Jay, but I don't feel like doing a thing." He sticks his head out the window a little further, peers down, and waves his hand. Scott waves.

"Well, are you going to let me get some peace or are you just going to keep standing down there barking at me?" Holden says.

"See you later," I say.

"Nice meeting you," Scott says.

"So long, old sport," Jay says.

The window slams. I laugh. "Jesus."

"Want to split a cab?" Scott says.

"Yeah, I guess so. You in Jay?"

"Certainly. I'll foot the bill as a matter of fact."

"You don't need to do that," Scott says.

"I insist," Jay says.

"That Holden, he's quite a character, isn't he?" Scott says.

"He's a good kid," I say. "Just hard to tell it sometimes."

"Oh, he's all right," Jay says.

We walk back up the street to hail a cab. This droplet of moisture hits my cheek that feels like liquid turning to solid, then another that feels like the reverse. I have this feeling it isn't going to end well for Jay.

For an instant, I wish I'd never showed up, either. Then we get in a cab, and the **wheels begin to turn.**

Memoirs in Blue

K. Faith Morgan Interior Design, Junior

'Is it possible to know a person's hobbies, interests, even their credit card providers, but never have direct contact? Is it possible to know everything about a person, and but nothing at all? No, I'm not talking about identity theft or stalkers. I'm talking about a person that you generally take for granted. It's your post man. And even though you don't usually notice him, everybody has a story.'

Seventy-six year old Dave Padgett had been a loyal employee of the United States Postal Service's office in Lost Gap, North Carolina for longer than anybody could remember. He started working there after he graduated from high school, and had been there ever since. He received his fifty year merit badge eight years ago. He wore it almost as proudly as he wore the worn and rusty navy blue "Best Granddad" button that his only grandson, Preston, sent him for Christmas when he was still young enough to think that mailmen were cool. Preston had since moved on to firemen, football stars, and finally he settled on lawyers. White collar. He was a senior in high school, and he was grooming himself for the profession. Dave was proud of him, but white collar Preston had long past being proud of blue collar Grandpa.

Dave's route was the last walking route left in the whole county. Houses in the historic district were grandfathered in after the city council voted to require the use of on-street mailboxes in 1980. In January of 1992 Mr. Johnson, the new postmaster, called Dave into his office and said,

"Now Dave, I've got a nice new truck out there, and it's yours if you want it. I know you like your current route, but it may be time to move on." The whole time Dave just stared at a barbecue stain on the cuff of Mr. Johnson's otherwise crisp, white shirt. Dave looked a bit bewildered, and shook his head. "What about your arthritis, Dave? You can't just ignore it; you won't be able to keep this route forever." Dave shrugged, shouldered his bag and walked out of the office. "You think about it Dave!" Mr. Johnson called after him.

On his way out, Dave passed the new truck. It was nice—crisp white exterior, black upholstery seats with no rips, across the side the stylized blue eagle blazed a trail along the road—top of the line for a mail truck. Some of the mail carriers in Lost Gap were still using their own cars and driving on the wrong side of the road. It sure would be nice sometimes... Neither sleet nor snow would sure seem easier with a roof over your head. Dave thought about it. He thought about it all day. In fact, when he returned from his route, he was debating with himself. What would he walk into the office and tell Mr. Johnson. Just as he was mulling over the decision he tripped over Laurence Moore who was lying on the ground under his car. Lawrence was the newest member of the "mail carrying team" as Mr. Johnson liked to call it. Mr. Johnson liked to emphasize team work. He thought it boosted employee moral. Laurence was one of the mail carriers driving his own vehicle, a beat up '76 brown Honda Accord.

"Sorry Mr. P." Laurence said from under the car.

"Oh no, I'm sorry Laurence. What are you doing under there?"

"Oh, just fiddlin'. I'm trying to get a few more miles out of this baby. My route sure takes a lot out of her. At this rate, the people on my route are going to need to use carrier pigeons, but the missus is pregnant and needs the more reliable car."

"Hmmm, well good luck Laurence." Dave said as he walked away.

"Good night Mr. P."

The next day Laurence was informed by the postmaster that the new truck would be assigned to him for his route. Laurence was all smiles. Dave smiled back, tucked some Advil in his pocket, shouldered his drab blue bag, and moved on with his old route.

For fifty some odd years, he had maintained the same route. Down Maple Avenue where the doctors and lawyers lived in cookie cutter red brick McMansions, left to Mockingbird which was populated with business men and classic white washed fences, then right across the foot bridge over Cicada creek to Debardeleben.

Debardeleben was the most interesting, and consequently his favorite street on the route. All of the interesting people that he "knew" from delivering mail either lived on, or had lived on this street at one time or another. He didn't know if there was something in the water, or, if like the birds of a feather, these people had just attracted each other. To the

passerby, it looked like any other street, but Dave knew better. Debardeleben was a time line of historic architectural stylings. There was no community planning, no strict neighborhood association, and no cohesive appeal to the neighborhood other than the fact that in its extreme eclectic nature it achieved the cohesion of eccentricity. The only apparent forethought in the neighborhood was the line of live oaks flanking the street. They had been planted by Ira Hershel Brownfield, the founder of Lost Gap in the late 19th century. The tree on the corner of Maple and Debardeleben had a plaque reading:

In Honor of Ira Hershel Brownfield Sr.

Founder of Our Fair City

Father of Us All

The house on the corner lot with the honored tree belonged to the Ramseys. Dave saw Mr. Ramsey almost every day in his front driveway, chainsaw in hand. Mr. Ramsey was a chainsaw sculptor. He specialized in bears. He had a family of bears in his front yard that he decorated with Santa hats and wreaths for Christmas. He had paid his homage to the "Founder of Our Fair City" in his own personal way: a chainsaw carved bust of a rather bear-like Ira placed next to the plaque.

Mr. Ramsey called his daughter Caroline his Goldilocks. For their Christmas post card one year they sent a picture of Caroline with a bowl of porridge standing by the bears. It said "We hope your holiday season is Just Right! Merry Christmas from the Ramseys." Mrs. Ramsey would always put a plate of her famous gingerbread cookies in the mail box for Dave when she put the Christmas cards in. Dave supposed it was because people felt sorry for postal workers around Christmas time with all of the cards and packages. Dave thought that the cookies made up for it "Just Right." Caroline had grown up though. She was in college, and she used a straightening iron on her golden locks. Dave only occasionally saw her green Mustang in the driveway on holidays. Last year over the Christmas holidays he saw her kissing a tall brunette in the snow by a white Mercedes that he didn't recognize with a Raleigh license plate. It must have turned out well. She was now engaged to him. Dave knew because he had pulled a pile of wedding invitations from their mailbox. There were a lot of invitations. There wasn't even enough room in the box for cookies. Mr. Ramsey was carving something for Caroline and her fiancé as a wedding gift. Dave couldn't quite make out what it was, but it looked something like a penguin, or a bowling pin: then again it really was too early to tell.

Dave enjoyed watching Caroline's young love. It reminded him of his own Sally Anne. They met in the thirties, during the great depression. Dave's father, Robert Padgett, was a pharmacist, and Lost Gap was his home town, so when the financial troubles were unable to be resolved, he relocated back home to start over. With what was left of his wealth, he was able to start "Bob's Drugs and Soda Fountain" on main street. Here he dispensed everything from common aspirin to miracle cures for warts. Dave worked at the drugstore in the afternoons making sundaes, pouring sodas, and flirting with all of the girls, pretty or not, who came to the counter. It was several months after they moved to Lost Gap before Dave met Sally Ann. Dave remembered the day exactly. It was June sixth—her twelfth birthday. Several of her friends had scraped together funds to treat her to a birthday sundae. She was wearing pale blue with a ribbon to match in her curly red hair. It was always Dave's favorite color on her. It matched her eyes. She wrapped a blue ribbon around her bridal bouquet, and he would never forget the lacy blue she wore on their first night at husband and wife. Kids...

Diagonally across the street from the Ramseys in a brick Tudor lived Ira Hershel Brownfield the fifth (Quint for short) and his family. Contrary to the wishes of his ambitious old money family, Quint had attended seminary. To make matters worse, he refused a job at the only church that his family had attended since Ira Hershel Brownfield Sr. had set the cornerstone of First Baptist Church of Lost Gap in 1893 on 10th street. Brother

Quint was the minister of education at the Gentle Waters Baptist church. This was a fancy way of saying that he was in charge of changing newborns diapers, cleaning glitter up after third grade Sunday School, and helping Mrs. Boisclair decorate the fellowship hall on every other Thursday night for the Senior Saints meeting. It meant that he was often tired, but he was happy. Brother Quint loved the people of Lost Gap; he loved all of them. Brother Quint was the only person on Dave's route that Dave actually knew personally. On the Thursdays that he wasn't responsible for decorating the fellowship hall, Brother Quint would invite Dave up to the house. In the winter they would sit at the kitchen table and down cups of coffee. In the summer they sat on the front porch and drank sweet tea while they listened to the sound of Mr. Ramsey's chainsaw eating away at a log in search of a bear. Every now and then Quint's wife Stella would join them. Sometimes one or two of the six little Brownfields would stop running long enough to chime in on a conversation, most often when it involved the newest Lego catalog that Dave had brought.

Dave's son Charlie loved Legos too. Charlie was Sally Anne and Dave's only son. He had red hair like Sally Anne and brown eyes like Dave. Legos were Charlie's favorite toys. When he was seven years old, he and Dave set out on a quest to build an eight foot tall Lego replica of the Eiffel tower for little sister Stephanie's French paper dolls. It was blue, because that was the closest color Lego had to Eiffel tower grey. By the time Charlie was eight and three quarters, the tower was six feet tall and more reminiscent of the leaning tower of Pisa. Legos never seemed to change. Little boys grow up though. Charlie was now Charles, father of Preston, the white collar lawyer to be.

The yellow brick Italianate house belonged to the McVeys. Mr. McVey was a retired veterinarian. Dave knew because he delivered the quarterly Auburn University Vet School alumni magazine along with AARP to 'Jacob McVey DVM.' Mrs. Rosalyn McVey liked to garden. Mrs. McVey didn't like the yellow brick, and she was trying to cover it up with ivy and jasmine. Every spring the jasmine would burst into hundreds of thousands of yellow blooms making the house, for a few short weeks, yellow again. Dave would smile when he put the Park Seed catalog in their ivy covered brick mailbox in February. He just knew that Mrs. McVey would get so much enjoyment from it. It would mean that it was time for her to start planning her garden for the spring.

He imagined that she would sit in her kitchen at the honey colored oak table (Dave had seen it when she had the blue chintz curtains drawn back in the summer) marking the catalog with flourishes of purple pen—the same purple pen she used to address letters to her sister in Georgia. Mr. McVey would walk up and hand her a cup of tea. "Jacob you are such a dear," she would say with her southern accent as rich as fudge. And then maybe, just maybe he would lean over the table and give her a kiss square on the lips (Dave had seen that through the window too). Jacob and Rosalyn McVey made Dave miss his own Sally Ann, especially in February when there was still snow on the ground, and the Park Seed catalog came and Rosalyn hung little red and pink paper hearts in the blue chintz curtained kitchen window. Once, on Valentine's Day Dave had seen the florist deliver flowers to the yellow house. Mr. McVey never bothered to send flowers in the summer because his wife had a garden full of flowers and she didn't want hot house flowers. In February though, the hot house flowers held her through to the next year, or so Dave expected. Mr. McVey sent his wife a bouquet of fifty-four red roses—one for every year that they had been married.

Dave and Sally Ann were only married for forty-three years. Sally Anne was the kind of woman that reminded people of a chickadee, small but competent, confident, cheeky. She used to say, "Now dear, I am simply proof that God believes in accessorizing, why else would he have accessorized my personality with my hair?"

It was the hardest thing for her when she lost all that red hair in chemotherapy. Part of her personality left with it. She was tired all the time. Dave tried to help her find her fire again, but it was too late. She died on June fourteenth, fifty-one years, and eight days after

the day that they met. She had asked to be buried in her blue dotted dress. Blue—Dave's favorite. It was strange when the funeral parlor gave Dave back Sally Anne's engagement and wedding rings. He'd been so used to seeing them on her slender fingers. He now kept them in a box on his night stand. Every now and then, when he was especially lonely, he would pull them out and hold them. He never let his children know that he still talked to her. They would try to take him to a nursing home, or worse. Dave wasn't quite used to his children expecting him to take orders from them. "Did you take your medicine Dad?" "You really should rest Dad." And the worst, "You know you won't be able to live by yourself forever Dad."

Dave didn't feel alone though. He could still talk to Sally Anne. He didn't even need her there to answer him. He had lived with her long enough that he always knew what she would say. He walked in the door and stamped the frost off of his boots.

"It was very cold today dear; you had best have some tea," she would say. So Dave started the kettle and got out two cups...no one. He still made that mistake, even after all those years. He ran his finger along the chipped rim of the cup.

"Did you have a nice day dear?" she would ask.

"Why yes I did." Then Dave told everything that had happened to him and his friends along Debardelaben while he cooked dinner. He looked out the window while he was washing the dishes and thought that perhaps Mr. Ramsey and Mrs. Ramsey were talking to Caroline on the phone. While he changed into his long-johns he thought the Brownfields would probably be eating dinner right about that time. When he crawled in bed he wondered if Mrs. McVey might be washing dishes, and maybe Dr. McVey slipped his arm around her waist. Maybe she kissed him and tweedled his nose with her soapy hand. Dave took the rings off of his bed side table and watched the diamond sparkle blue in the moon light, blue like Sally Anne's hair ribbon.

Smoke on the Wind

Daniel Milton

He sat on a stiff wooden bench in the small alleyway behind the Hall of Presidents at Disney World. Bent over, head in his hands, he tried to ignore the sounds all around him. Chatter, laughs, squeals of excitement, music and footsteps. An orchestra of humanity. He could smell the overpowering aroma of funnel cakes dusted with sugar and the freshly baked and salted pretzels. That too, he struggled to ignore. The alley wasn't dark, but it was fairly deserted, and that's why he had come here. It was a small connection from the back of the store that sold American memorabilia and the side of Casey's Corner, where the tempting and sickening smells were emanating from. Sunset was almost over and at last look the light was retreating from the approaching black sky. But here he sat, head in his hands, trying to ignore it all. His father had been dead for two weeks.

Where are you?

There were so many women in his life. Four sisters and a mother all agreed coming here was a good idea. He had vehemently disagreed, but was voted down. He thought maybe this was their way of dealing with everything, but he couldn't understand why they would want to be here, at this place. Just because dad insisted they come here every year as a family didn't mean they had to go now. Two weeks after everything. Two weeks after his world was shattered. Of course, the youngest of them all, Dylan, had no choice. He was only three but he already looked so much like their father. Thick brown hair swept back from almond shaped blue eyes and large eyebrows, a small nose and lips always prepared to pout. His skin was fair like their father's, just like all of them. And they all had the same eyes. You couldn't miss the resemblance. Andy's had a bit more of a red tint to them the past two weeks. Tears do that.

You were everywhere, today.

Here they had come, on his mother's whim he supposed, to enjoy themselves. Have a good time, ride rides, smile and laugh, with a noticeably absent member. Dad had always been in the middle of everything, laughing the loudest, smiling the biggest, and hugging the hardest. Andy remembered when he used to be well over eight feet tall and 400 pounds of muscle, but as Andy grew older, his father shrunk. He used to say all the smartest and greatest things, but he had lost wisdom as the years marched on. It had been worse recently, since Andy left for college.

While his sisters and his mother walked the cobble streets of the most wonderful place on earth, huddled together and pointing, he and Dylan had been on the outside. Dylan looked confused and weak. He held a Buzz Lightyear doll their father had gotten him last year, and looked around as if searching for something. Andy tried to hold his hand, but Dylan would refuse it. Andy couldn't blame him for feeling lost. He himself had been looking for someone all day. A cartoon character. He thought maybe it was the way Mickey smiled, or that he always seemed happy, no matter the circumstance. It was their relationship, he and his father's; a pyramid of Disney World with a mouse on top. It was something they had always had in common.

The sky was blue and cloudless today, maybe for you.

Andy was sure he would have caught a glimpse of him earlier this morning in the parade. They could hear the music and noise approaching as thousands of people lined the street. He had left his place to walk around a shop and get a closer look on the other side only to find he had missed most of the parade. As Beauty and the Beast danced past, his heart sank. He had gotten soaked from the spray at the bottom of Splash Mountain's drop. Then they had eaten lunch at Pecos Bill's Café - overpriced chicken fingers with large lemonades, extra for the honey mustard sauce. He had pushed around his thin and over-salted fries while everyone else devoured their lunch. They left Pecos Bill and headed for It's a Small World. Andy kept a look out, but there was still no sign of him.

No one else had seemed to notice the Haunted Mansion as they had passed it. The hundreds of headstones and corpses set the mood well, but in Andy only stirred anger. Near Cinderella's Carousel a line of children were waiting to take their picture with Goofy. Andy spoke with an attendant who told him he just missed the mouse. On the It's a Small World ride, he – Andy – commented that on a ride which struggled to promote diversity, it was ironic that each culture was dressed in stereotypical clothing. He received blank stares from his family. His father would have laughed. Dylan hugged Buzz and gazed down. Andy had looked for the mouse near the Swiss Family Robinson tree, and thought about him as he rode the Jungle Cruise. Somberness descended when, passing through a dark cave with a tribal theme, the tour guide pointed out with glee hanging skeletons and skulls strewn about the plastic and rocky cave floor. His sisters stared in various directions and his mother's makeup ran. They exited the ride and his family acted like it didn't happen. You would never ignore anything, always up-front and sincere.

He was nowhere around Cinderella's Castle, either, when Andy and his family ate an early dinner. Mother had ordered the Chicken Parmesan with a side Caesar salad for him, after he ignored the waitress's questions. They ordered one of the other four choices on the menu, and had eaten as the mice danced around them. Dessert was served, and the Fairy Godmother sang. Andy might have thrown-up had there been anything in his stomach to vomit. The family ignored him, and he still sought Dylan's hand. He wanted to hug him and see him smile and take him away from this wretched place. His brother was not having a good time, and Andy wondered why his mother could not see that, or if she could see it.

In Tomorrowland, he had told his mother he felt ill and couldn't ride on Space Mountain, so they went in without him and Dylan. The two brothers had sat outside studying the families. The sky was clear and blue and the wind cooled them. He saw the funeral, again. There was so much black then. So many people he didn't know and so few that understood.

Your dad was a great man.

We'll all miss him.

This is a terrible loss.

You'll be ok.

Empty words. During the funeral he had kept a close eye on Dylan, as he did now. His eyes

brimmed as he thought of his little brother never really knowing their dad. He imagined them throwing the baseball together. He imagined them laughing and running. He saw fishing trips, hunting trips and grocery trips. He saw Dylan looking up to the big man as they sang in church, saw his dad stand taller and prouder than most. He pictured that smile, that wink, the consolation and safety offered in every move and word. He saw his daddy holding the small figure close, in the dark of night, whispering that he would never leave. And now, Andy wasn't sure who the little figure was anymore. He bit his lip, fought back tears that made him weak.

How could I ever be strong like you?

It had been a car accident. A man named Samuel Tyler, driving on less than two hours of sleep. At 3:27 in the afternoon he closed his eyes for a split second, and in that second Andy's father was pulling out of his office building's parking lot. He was fifty-two years old and twenty pounds overweight with bags under his eyes. In his office, pictures of their large and jovial family decorated the walls. There were pictures of Andy and his father with Mickey Mouse, a tradition. Andy sat unmoving. He appreciated the silence. He couldn't speak just yet. Minutes passed as the sun fell below the horizon. The only light came from the torches encased in glass that covered the brick wall behind them. He wondered if the fireworks would be starting soon.

Why did you leave?

A slight breeze flowed through the alleyway and for the thousandth time he imagined his father, unable to move, barely able to breathe. He imagined the blood running down the corners of his mouth, the numbness of his legs and his thoughts. His father had died alone. No friends, family or co workers. No tax collectors, no preachers, no salesmen or mayors. Probably not even God. He just laid there, and bled his life out alone with his thoughts, whatever they might have been.

He looked down the alleyway and noticed a short man smoking a cigarette. The light was too dim to make him out, but something large sat on the ground just next to the man. Andy wondered if he knew that smoking wasn't allowed in the park. The man finished his cigarette and flicked the butt on the ground. He picked up the object that was next to him and stepped out into the light on the other side. He put the large object on his head, and Andy watched as Mickey Mouse started jumping and clapping towards an excited child. Andy laughed. He gasped for breath. A pool of water at the corner of both eyes threatened to tip and spill his grief. He planned to tell his family that Mickey Mouse smoked. Maybe they would believe him.

That would have been the best picture we'd ever taken together.

Andy cried finally. He put his face in his hands and cried for the father he would never see again. He cried at the thought of God. He cried for himself. He cried until there nothing was left. He breathed deeply and tried to calm himself. He wiped his tears and his nose. He was too embarrassed to look up. He wondered if people had come to watch. He wondered where his family was and if they had noticed he was gone. He thought about the

fake Mickey Mouse, and tried to connect it all, tried to understand the difference between fantasy and reality.

Are you really looking down on me, or is that just something they say?

He didn't understand it all, and knew it might always be that way. His father was still gone, but still loved. He stood, as if in a dream. He walked out of the alleyway and made his way towards the bridge that led to the front of the castle. He would miss his father. A loud pop made him look up. Streams of blue, green and red shot into the night sky. Yellow followed. The light twisted into various shapes as it exploded in the night sky. Pop after pop the shapes and symbols made the children around him squall and laugh. Nothing was different. His father was still dead. But music was coming through now. He would make it down this long road. The crescendo of light spread out over the castle as the frantic explosions quickened. The show was coming to the end, but the end was the best. The light was so bright as it spread over the park, and as the colors and sound faded there remained streams

of smoke. **Slowly, a gentle breeze carried them over the castle and out to the world.**

My Monster, My Self

Autumn McGahan Pre-Nursing Sophomore

"This was an essay for my english class on a monster in my life. I felt the most terrifying monster is myself since it is the one thing I can control and not control at the same time. Only I can do true damage to myself since I am the one making my decisions, but at the same time I am the only one that can fix my problems too."

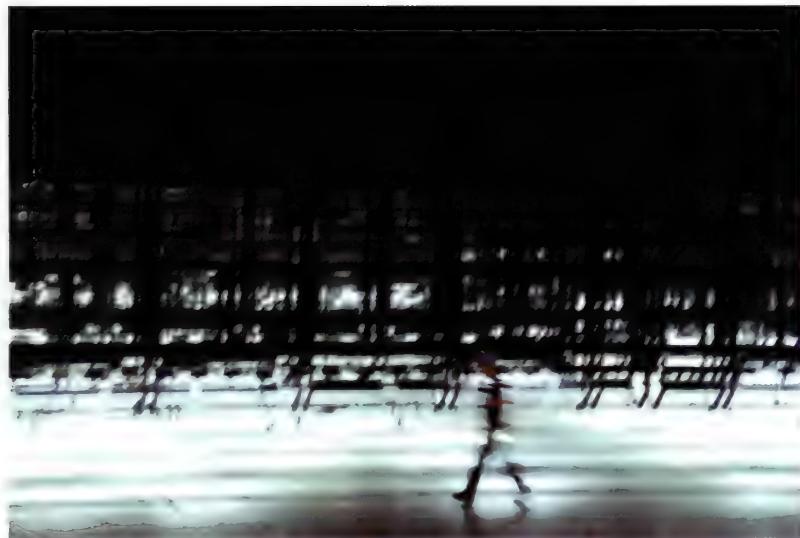
My life like anyone else's has been filled with many monsters. I have had real monsters such as jealous boyfriends, as well as imaginary monsters that lived in my closet. I've learned to conquer many of my monsters, yet a major one still remains. It is a real monster that cannot be conquered.

It is an inescapable monster that follows me with its learned eyes. Its paws trod silently behind my vulnerable back everyplace I venture. Its claws twist my body in every act I undergo, contorting my movements from grace to ungainly. Its hiss replaces my words with its own mocking tongue, changing my choices from right to wrong. Its feverish heat devours my brain, skewing my thoughts to suit its whims, warping my ideas and dreams. It embeds its scaly wings onto my back so that it may take me where it wants to go. It holds my eyes open to sights I do not wish to see; it captures my hands from my ears for things I do not wish to hear; it rolls my tongue to words I do not wish to say. It pushes me when I dare not budge, and seizes me when I want to run away. It laughs when I cry, enjoying the sight of my broken heart and torn by its own thorns no less. My monster is me.

I am my monster I control my every thought and judgment. I am the only one that can bring my downfall, as well as the only one that can prevent it. I can choose my own path, but sometimes I do not have the will power too. For this, I am my monster, unconquerable, inescapable, and undefeatable.

A blurry photograph of a person standing under a bridge with many thin, radiating lines of light.

{photography}



1

1 A Stroll In the Cold
Mike Porter
Industrial Engineering, Sophomore
"Photography is the quest to understand the mystery which is light and shadow."



2

2 Shoshone Falls
Gorham Bird
Architecture, Freshman
"I took this photo at the end of a week long hike in the Shoshone National Forest in Wyoming."



3

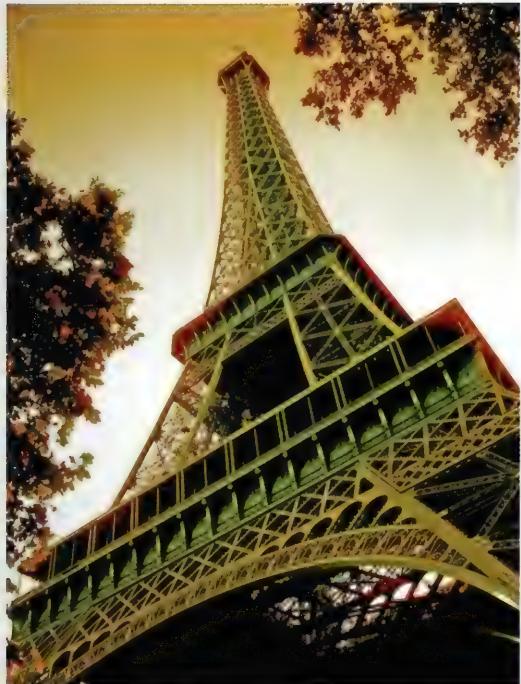
3 Ribbon
Erin Zeanah
Interior Design, Freshman
"This is a digital photograph, and it is meant to portray an ordinary object made special. I decided to use a colorful pink ribbon inside an old jelly jar to make the jar stand out to the viewer and make the viewer see it in a new light."

4 Eiffel Tower
Kelsey Premo
Graphic Design, Freshman
"I tried to add a "warm" feeling to the picture by changing the colors."

5 Ginza District
Allan Seibert

6 The Jump
Ashley Hollis
Graphic Design, Sophomore
"A day at the beach featuring Daniel Allen sand dune jumping."

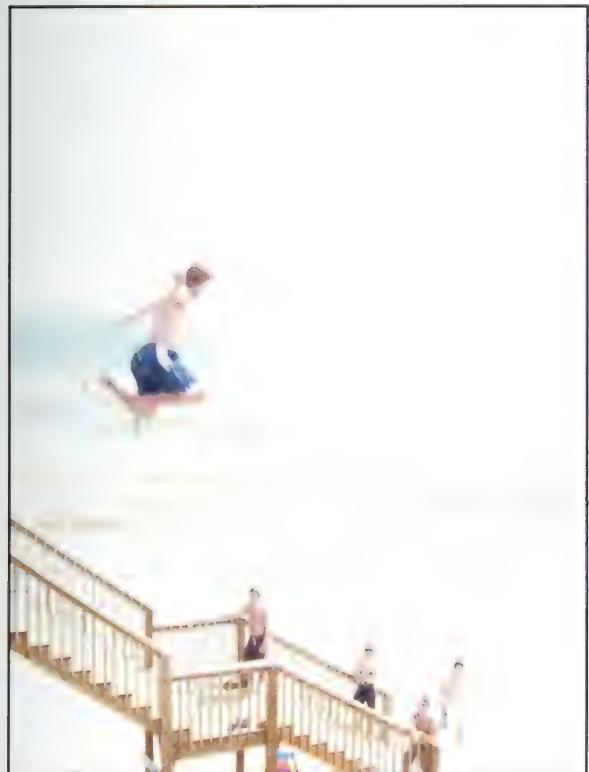
7 Mailbox Convention
Andrea Carboni
Political Science, Junior



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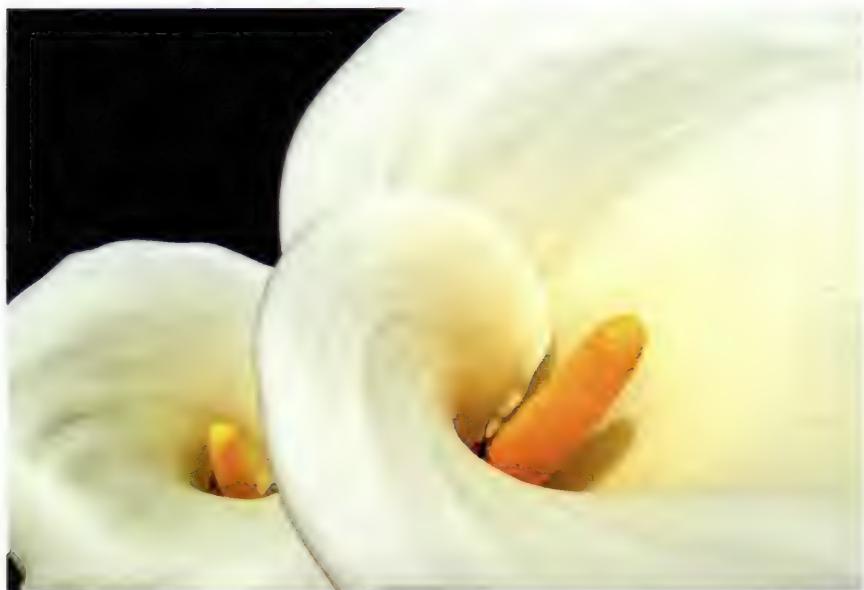
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1 Sweet Child

Ericka Bennett

Communication, Senior

"This photograph was taken at "Stars of Grace" - a Christmas party for inner-city children in Atlanta, GA hosted by Vision Atlanta. This incredible organization holds events and summer camps for the less fortunate children in Atlanta. I've been blessed to spend some time volunteering with Vision Atlanta, and this day was extra-special. I couldn't help but fall in love with this beautiful little girl. With her mismatched gloves and bashful smile, she completely captured my heart!"



4

2 New York At Night

Hannah Caballero

Social Work, Sophomore

3 Flower No. 3

Jacob Smith

Undeclared, Sophomore

"I took this picture in Auburn during the spring. The tight cropping and intense contrast are meant to evoke a sense of family."



5

4 Sunset

Carrie Norton

Architecture, Junior

"The sunsets somehow seem more vivid in Hale County, AL."

5 Hell on the Horizon

Adam Sleeper

Landscape Design, Junior

6 Jars of Light

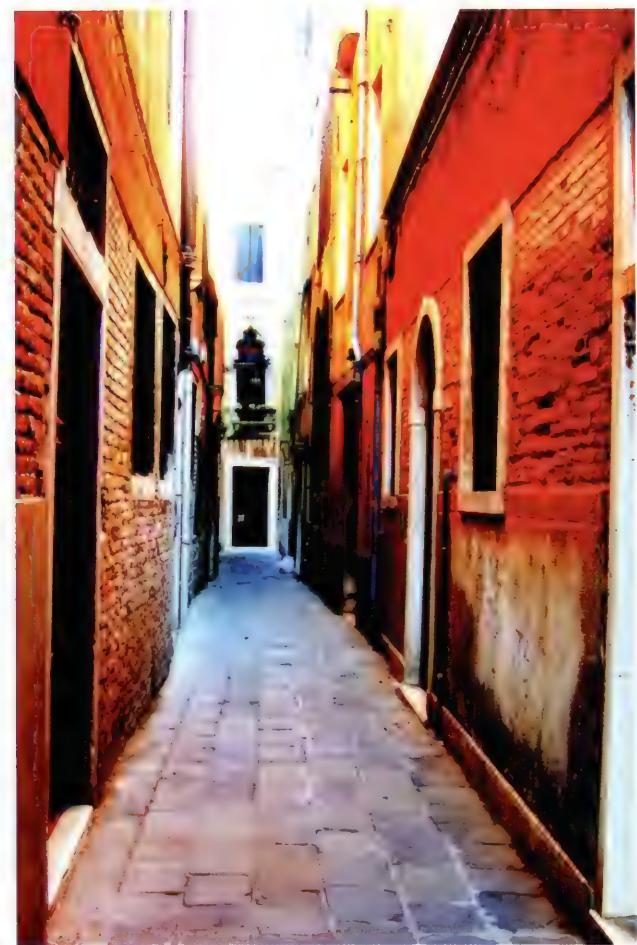
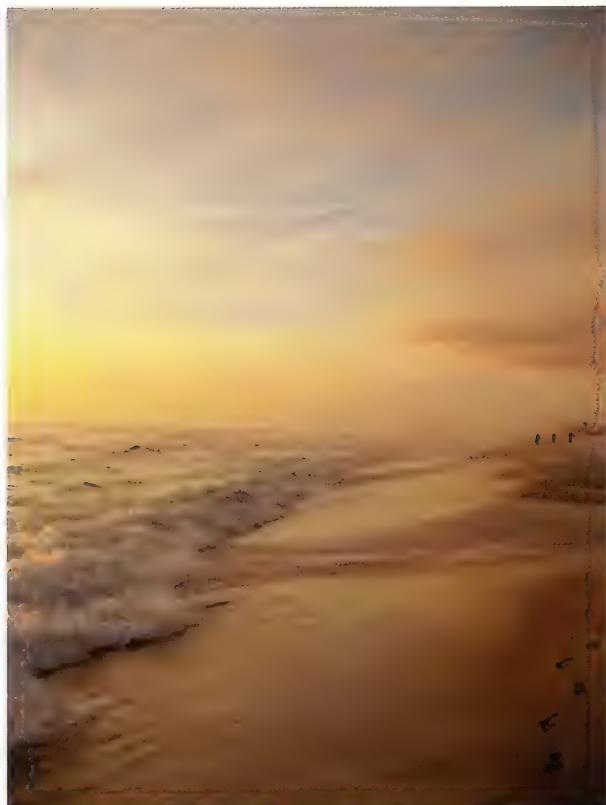
Julie Young

Architecture, Junior

"Lighting has become an indispensable condition; so, why not utilize its luminance in a creative manner."



6



1 Foot Prints
Caitlin Bearden

2 Solitude
Caitlin Bearden

3 Southern Smoked Soul Food
Corey Shepherd
Marketing, Senior
"This sign began its life in the 1960's at Ruby's Diner in Norris City, Illinois and now makes its home at Big Boy's Barbeque in Crossville, Tennessee."

4 Areaway
Hannah Caballero
Social Work, Sophomore
"While in Venice, I walked right down this alley way. I looked back before I turned the corner, and realized what an amazing photo opportunity this was. If I wouldn't have turned around, I would have never captured this moment. Life is life that sometimes. You just have to make an effort to capture all of the moments."

5 Squall
Carson Davis
Industrial Design, Junior

6 Lake Reflections
Anna Lucy
Fine Art, Sophomore

7 The Ole Loachapoka Bridge
Carrie Norton
Architecture, Junior



5



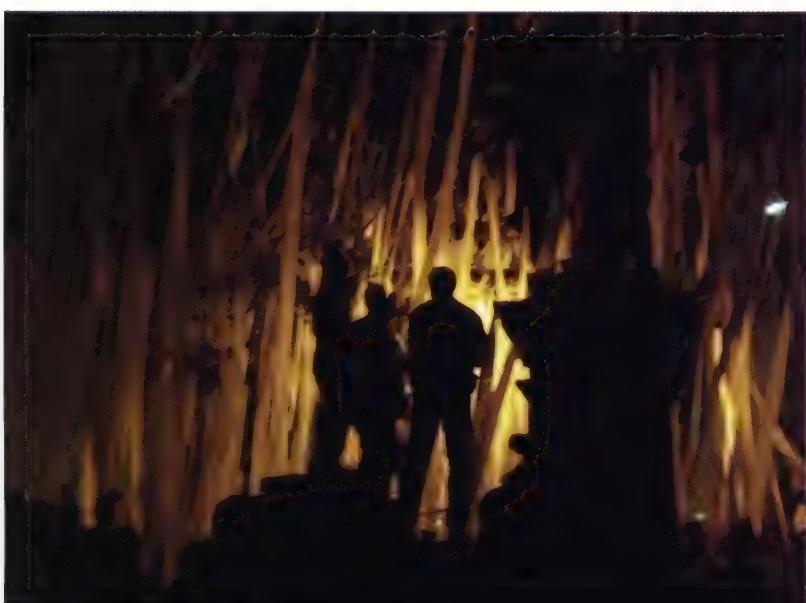
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7



1 *Faint Forest*
John Hueffed
Wildlife Science, Freshman



2 *Toomer's Corner at Night*
Christopher Meinsler
Communication, Senior
"This was after the Auburn vs. Georgia game in 2005. I took this one last picture as I was leaving, almost as an afterthought. When I looked at the picture later I thought, "Wow, this makes it appear as if I actually have some sort of talent." So I submitted the picture so that all Auburn fans could enjoy the memory of one of our greatest victories ever."



3 *Orchidae by Day*
Devin M. Dotson
Agricultural Communication, Senior
"Taken at the National Botanical Gardens in Washington, D.C."

4 Reflection

Doug Van Wie

Graphic Design, Senior

"This piece was part of a series about life after college and the sense of uncertainty that accompanies it."

5 Driven by Passion

Ericka Bennett

Communication, Senior

"I shot this photograph on my way into the "Go Center" at the Passion Conference this January. In only 3 days this conference of 22,000 passionate college students raised over \$950,000.00 for world missions. It was inspiring. It was intoxicating. It was contagious. Only moments after this picture, I walked into the "Go Center" and became the sponsor of two needy children in Kenya - Dama (5), and Erick (7) through Compassion International. My generation has the vision and desire to change the world!"

6 Adrift

Doug Van Wie

Graphic Design, Senior

"This piece was part of a series about life after college and the sense of uncertainty that accompanies it."

7 Sunday Afternoon

Devin M. Dotson

Agricultural Communication, Senior

"My uncle loves sharing leisurely time with family and friends, especially on slow Sunday afternoons."



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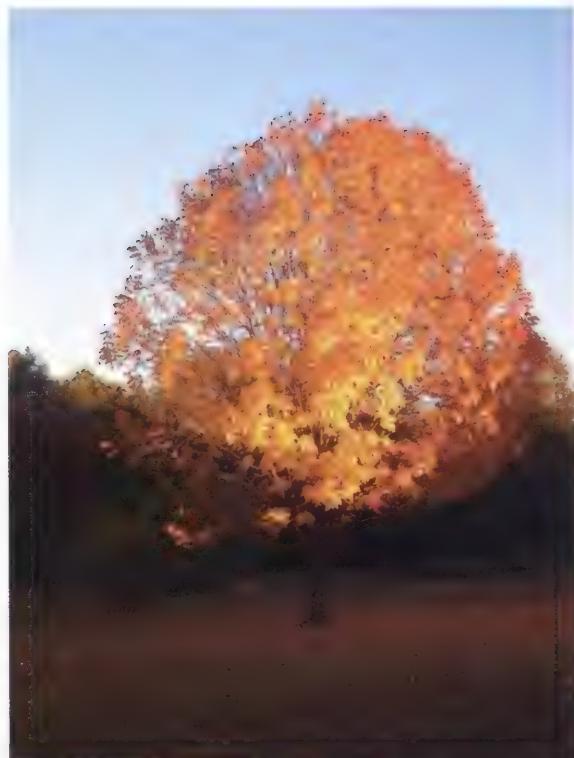
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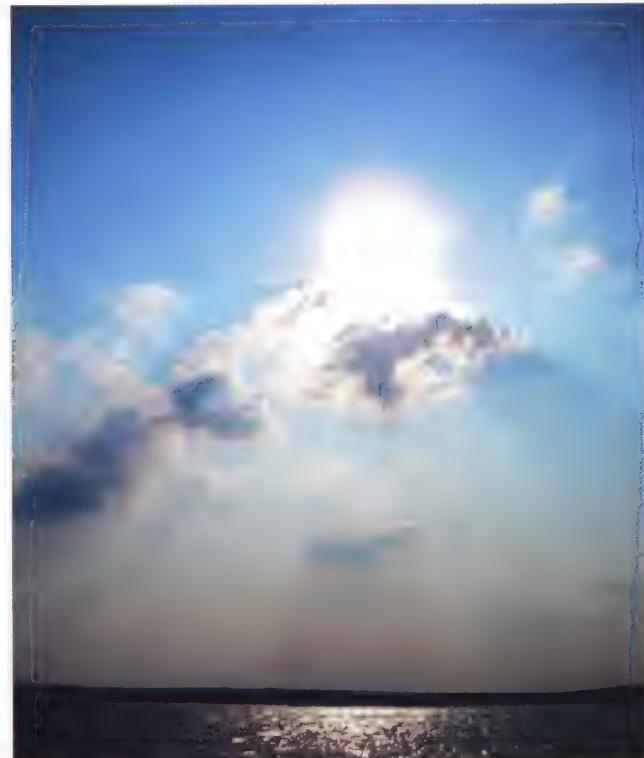
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4

1 Lauren
Emily Krenkle
Graphic Design, Junior



2 Reflections in Rome
Samantha Tashman
Secondary School, English
Junior
"I took this picture while studying abroad in Rome. I think everything is more beautiful when you are in Rome."

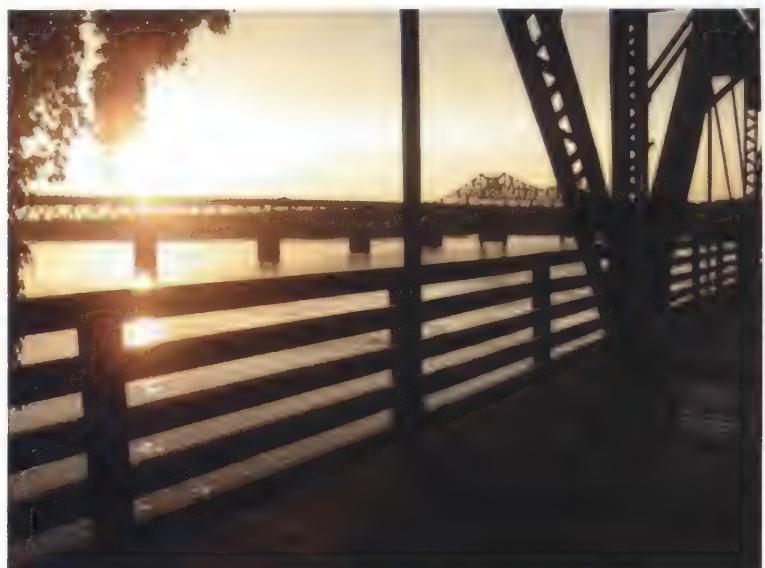
3 Fall Begins
Jennifer Isenburg

4 Crowned
Laura Taylor

5 Painted Desert
Liz Geare
Interior Design, Junior
"Saturated with vivid and brilliant colors, Summer Sunsets in Arizona are truly unique and remarkable."

6 Somewhere in Nashville
Kristina Tanner

7 A Light Amidst the Darkness
Kristin O'Kain
Marketing, Freshman
"This photo is of an old train bridge, which I see as an amazing place to go to reflect and think about life."



1 As Darkness Encroaches

Stephen Potts

Mechanical Engineering, Senior

"The firelight gave this photograph from the Sipsey Wilderness its interesting, almost monochromatic color. I wanted to give the viewer the feeling of being an outsider looking in. I also like the idea of ambiguity about the nature of the outsider, whether he or she (or it) is lonely, curious, dangerous, or some combination of the three."

2 Conway Acres Sunset

John Higginson

3 Marble Madness

Mike Porter

Industrial Engineering, Sophomore

"Easily forgotten. Forever remembered."

4 Headed Home

Lindsey Goodwyn

Early Childhood Education, Freshman

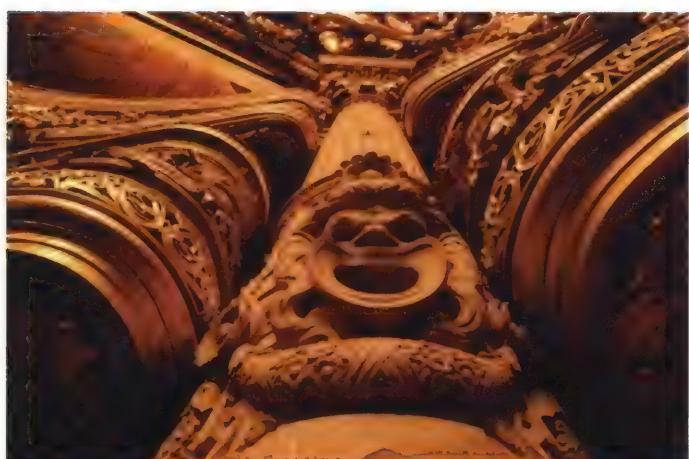
"I was out taking pictures for an art project at a friend's farm. I took this picture while riding in a truck when we entered inside the gate and the cows came rushing towards us."



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4

5 Pretty Girl
Ricky Lee Whittemore II
Management Information Systems,
Junior
"My family's favorite cow."



5

6 Arboretum Dawn
Patrick G. Thompson
Horticulture, Biological Sciences
"I do some of my favorite
photography between my truck
and the office each morning."



6

7 Nathan Lucy
Biochemistry, Junior
"They Venusians are a peaceful
people, this photo is a tribute to
their harmonious way of life. Or,
Awaking, I squinted up at geology,
growth, and geometry."



7



1

1 Gears of Progress*Stephen Potts**Mechanical Engineering, Senior*

"I like the juxtaposition of the lathe, a mechanical tool of war, and Samford Hall, the best-known symbol of the educational institution. It seems that this both represents the history of the university and explains much about its unique character today."

2 Tower of London*Jonathan Pears**Marketing, Senior*

"Making something as inconspicuous as a tree is the focus of a picture with a building of so much importance in the background."



2

3 Chel(eye)dra*Patrick G. Thompson**Horticulture, Biological Sciences*

"This serious swamp character (*Chelydra serpentina*) was cruising the shallows of the Arboretum stream."

4 Days End*Matt Pickard**Business, Sophomore*

"Taken while hiking in the Cascade Mountains."

5 Horse*Stephen DeVries**Fine Art, Senior*

"I was working with light and found this horse one morning while the sun was rising behind it. He made a perfect model for a back-lit subject."

6 Sarah Harriage*Journalism, Junior*

"This photo was taken in December '06 on the Alabama River in downtown Montgomery."



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1 *London Eye*

Kelsey Premo

Graphic Design, Freshman

"It was a bright day, and I tried to capture light as it shined through the spokes of the Eye."

2



2 *Meal of Gratitude*

John Wall

Mechanical Engineering,

Graduate Student

"Afternoon rays light the Thanksgiving table to complete the warmth of family gathered together."

3 *Flower*

Laura Taylor

3



4 *Credence*

Carson Davis

Industrial Design, Junior

5 *Southern Living*

Lauren Smith

Community Agency Counseling,
Grad Student

"I love being from Louisiana and this picture shows the some of the beauty you see riding through the back roads of this wonderful Cajun Country."



4



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3

1 Trust
Andrea Carboni
Political Science, Junior

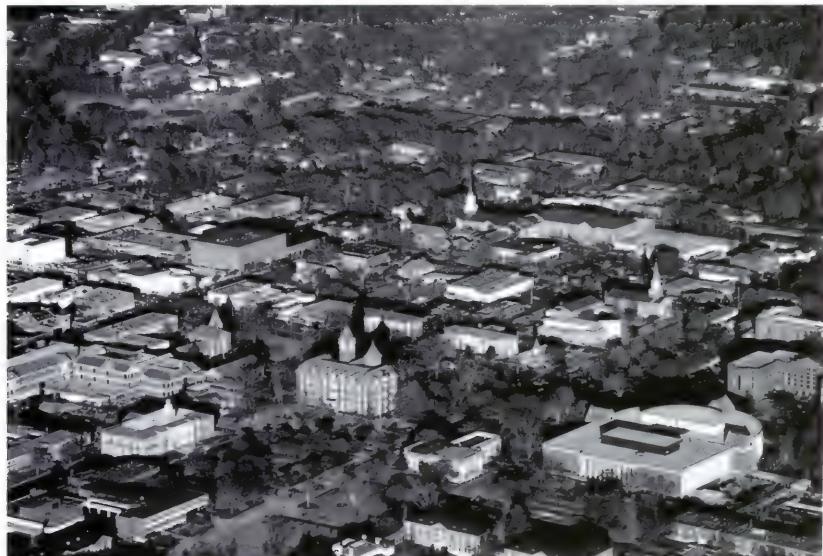
2 Beyond the Cold
A. Hope Askew
Graphic Design, Senior

3 Speed in Numbers
Darrell Krueger
Mechanical Engineering, Grad Student
"I saw this shot while in the bathroom during an Atlanta Thrashers game. The pattern really caught my eye, and after making sure the coast was clear I took the exposure. Looking at the photo, it should become quite clear why guys are in and out of the bathroom so fast!"

4 Samford Shadows
Audrey Loux
Graphic Design, Senior

5 A Rustic Retreat
Audrey Loux
Graphic Design, Senior
"A foggy mountain morning created the perfect setting to capture the peaceful tranquility of this Tennessee log cabin."

6 Bigger than the Sky, Or, Holding All 87,451 of Your Closest Friends Is Quite a Job
Nathan Lucy
Biochemistry, Junior
"I love patterns and texture. Jordan-Hare and I have been on the rocks lately, so I'm grateful she posed for me..."



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1 Streets
Corrye Mobley

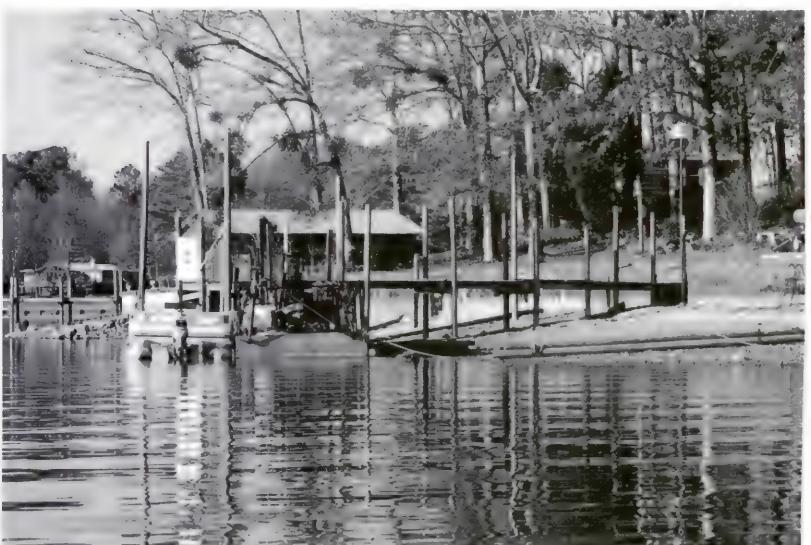


2 Now and Then
Hannah Caballero
Social Work, Sophomore
"I thought that this was an amazing site, seeing the beautiful old architecture still standing in front of a modern skyscraper."

3 Dudley's Derelict Digs
Darrell Krueger
Mechanical Engineering, Graduate Student

"While out shooting some railroad photography, (the tracks are behind me), and waiting for the next train, this run-down home was cast in some very eerie light. One can imagine why the tenants might have moved out as it is next to a railroad track and the very loud Dudley's Lumber mill."

4 Off Season
Shelby Agnew
Animal Sciences, Sophomore
"Lake Logan Martin, Christmas 2006"



5 Angel Oak
Jacob Smith
Undeclared, Sophomore
"This is the oldest living thing east of the Mississippi. I photographed this tree while on vacation with my family in South Carolina."



5

“A Room of My Own: Memoirs from a Cherry-Oak Desk”

Valerie Virciglio

English, Senior

“Woolf’s “A Room of One’s Own” is a piece of writing that constantly inspires me...it reminds me that the act of writing is both collective and private, and never completely uncomplicated.”

For my belief is that if we live another century or so...and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too...if we look past Milton’s bogey, for no human being should shut out the view; and we face the fact for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone...then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare’s sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down.

When Virginia Woolf sat, possibly at her writing desk, and in a room of her own to write down these words in 1928, she understood entirely that she was both blessed and condemned as a woman, and that women would remain tangled in opposition until the opportunity to possess a room of one’s own became a reality instead of her intricate dream—her wish for all women. I cannot help but believe that she knew the impact her words would have in the next century, which is now among us. One would find the challenge grueling and the effort to no avail to convince me otherwise.

As I sit at my writing desk, one that resembles cherry oak but is not, and that is okay, I know that, I too, am both blessed and condemned. My writing table is one I happened upon. Not very long ago, I found a card table that was the color of cherry oak in my mother’s basement. The authentic cherry oak desk that once belonged to Papaw, her father, was given to my brother, and that is okay too, though it took me a little while to get over. I adored this desk for its history as well as its beauty. Certainly more than its beauty, I loved the history of this desk and the thought of being part of that history.

Papaw’s desk served a variety of purposes during its earlier days as his working/writing desk at Dixie Shoe Store in Bessemer, AL, which he owned and ran prior to and following his service in WWII. He received a purple heart. Dixie Shoe Store, located next to Albano’s pharmacy downtown, mysteriously burned to the ground. We are still not convinced that the pharmacy next door had no hand in this—for it would have been timely for the Albano’s I hear. Or, rather, heard listening while the adults talked at Margo’s house, Papaw’s wife and my beloved grandmother, my best friend. I am the eldest grandchild, and surely one can see how a desk I loved and thought would be mine for the taking was a shock at least when given to my brother while I—like always—was away at college. However, my brother, David, never knew Papaw the way I did. He may not remember him at all. I spent

years with Papaw dancing for him in the living room to The Oakridge Boys on the massive oak stereo that played records and radio. He sat in the faded peach chair next to the stereo clapping and stomping his feet, even when he no longer clapped and was confused he still smiled each time I performed for him. The smile was different, but the love was the same. David is most like Papaw, Sam Bivona, than any other family member, and he is my favorite in a sense. His humility, gentility, and fairness make it easy to love him. Also, the fact that he is my only male sibling enables him to be favored without detailed explanation and hurt feelings. David understands my need for silence and my vulnerable awkwardness upon coming home to disarray—to chaos and unrequited fights. David would give me this desk if I asked, but I never will. David should have the cherry oak desk.

When David was about two years old Papaw who was already in the mid-stages of Alzheimer’s became unbearable for Margo to manage on her own, unsafe, really, and so she did one of the hardest things she ever had to do in her life as she made the call to Plantation Manor. I sat on her bed next to her as she quietly confirmed that Sam J. Bivona would be joining the home in two weeks. Margo was rarely quiet.

As I have grown I have become more like my grandmother, or perhaps I am coming to realize that I am like her. While I am rarely quiet with friends and family I require a great deal of solitude where I am quiet and reflective. Only in certain circumstances do I remain quiet [unrequited fights at home would be one example], speak or respond quietly, and usually, in many situations, I choose silence.

Silence is crucial when as I sit at my faux cherry-oak table to write, with a window to my right. I look out past the alley and the hedge of bushes with the barbed wire down below to a room that is not mine but is hers. Woolf’s—the room of my soul. The room is square like my desk with white walls and a window on the back wall, the one that faces a courtyard from the fourth-story of a building, French-provincial in style with high ceilings and hardwood floors, many stairways and long narrow halls. Perhaps, it is a home. Yet, the room is all that matters.

A desk made of walnut is longer than it is deep and it sets high directly in front of the window which is parallel to the door. The door is not very old though the paint is chipped just a little on the outside frame, in the brass knob fits a small key. The key is old but strong, copies can no longer be made of this particular brand of key—it is an early nineteenth-century key now only used to open cabinets from furniture of the period. Inside the room

is a high-backed chair with legs that resemble an antique tub, its seat is raised in perfect measure with the surface of the room’s desk. A simple but intricate design decorates the desk’s outlines, and then there is a border, small and floral. Elegant and faded flowers split the desk in half with smaller rectangles that verge on square, but because of the desk’s length remain rectangular in shape. One could use this faded border to separate work finished from unfinished, sources from manuscript, or a number of other possible combinations. I would not be so regular, so arranged but would only put what I saw fit in front of me leaving the rest on the small bookshelf to the left of the French provincial window that hangs like a portrait in the center of the room’s front wall directly in front of the desk. A perfect view, for it would be entirely impossible to shut out a view from such a window.

Surrounded by white walls and a high wooden-beamed ceiling and held up with hardwood floors, the window is the focal point of this room and points upward to the sky, to God, to the Angels and Witches, to the Virgin and the Magdalene, to Woolf, to Judith, and to Sylvia, to the Saints. An arch shaped like an inverted V reaches so high that one can see above the moon on nights when the moon is so high it is only a sliver and the whole neck must be bent backward to receive the full view, but it’s worth it. The window has no blinds because once-entered, this room is private, privileged—clandestine. My destiny depends on this room more than partially. I have never been granted the solitude of my early years until I came upon “A Room of One’s Own” and sought it out, fought for it, and continue to fight for this solitude, this right, this necessity for creation, for reflection, for clarity, purpose, and joy. How else can a woman who writes maintain freedom and joy without a room of her own, and the physical and mental space such a room provides? She cannot; I cannot.

There must be freedom and there must be peace. Not a wheel must grate, not a light glimmer. The curtains must be close drawn. The writer, I thought, once his experience is over must lie back and let his mind celebrate its nuptials in darkness.

Only in the darkness of solitude and in the quiet of the mind nor preoccupied with superfluous matters nor bowed down with the weight of the world can the peace and freedom required to write, to create, to envision and dream be cultivated. As I sat in the basement at the desk with metal folding legs that was the perfect height as long as I took the old wooden chair with a faded needlepoint seat—I had to make it mine. I needed to take it with me when I left my mom’s house, this basement. Over the

course of the weekend, I had got little done regarding writing, reading, or studying yet I had located, finally, my writer's desk.

So I grabbed that table with all my might, folded it up, placed it in my car, and brought it with me to my home at school where finally I am granted the privilege to live alone. It sits in the room across the hall from my bedroom. My sister's old room transformed with one table into my own. Inspired by Woolf, driven with frustration and desire, I created my room of one's own—a room of my own but not without struggle. Then again, I never intended it to be any other way.

I would like to say that I have lied back often celebrating my nuptials, but that would be untrue. In these last four years of college writing has become increasingly difficult for a host of reasons; the greatest of these being that as one gets older it becomes more difficult to have that purity of intention, that incandescent mind, the energy and ambition that one has when college or any great stage in life begins. In the beginning, the mind is open to any and all new information, knowledge; people intrigues and are spectacles of wonder; professors are from novels written by Dickens, characters straight out of *The Dead Poet's Society*. Then one becomes aware that all those with a doctorate and a passion for literature are not Robin Williams. Each person on the concourse reading a novel is not a Pip or a Catherine, or even an Emma. College is a privilege. Nevertheless, it is an institution made up of humans who are depressed and lonely, inspired and confused, tired and weary, and then there are the ones who skip right along, finish in four years, and move gently into the career they knew the institution's degree would ensure.

Yet here I sit at my desk into my seventh year of college and I know I could never have finished in four years and I am pretty sure that was not my desire, even in theory. Because a girl like me needs structure as she loathes it, seeks out company as she desires solitude, practices peace as she has a panic attack. Always reminding myself to breathe. I look back and I am positive it would have been a tragedy to rush...or to give up. I'm not, and I'll repeat for emphasis, I am not left-brained or single-minded. Life's interruptions occur and I welcomed them like a long-lost friend over and over again. Moving me back and forth, in circles, always transforming me, thinking at times I had figured it all out only to return to the same place I began. I was a candle in the wind during a hurricane. I was a gypsy, a tumbleweed, but I relished every moment and was present, engaged, and most of all, I was surrounded by people who inspire, motivate, and are an endless source of love and courage for me.

No need to hurry. No need to sparkle. We are all going

to Heaven and Vandycy is of the company—In other words, how good life seemed, how sweet its rewards, how trivial this grudge or that grievance and how admirable friendship and the society of one's own kind, as, lighting a good cigarette, one sunk among the cushions in the window seat.

With these words I arise from my writing table, descend down the stairs of my two-story loft, open the front door on the right and walk out to a porch where the alley sits, still down below. Now not quite as far out as it is from the view at my window-seat. Lighting a cigarette, I contemplate the people and interruptions I welcomed. The truth of this passage sinks deep into the core of my being—deeper each time I inhaled. To hurry, for me, is futile—my work, my love, all of my life's endeavors reflect the rushed ness of one who is only half engaged, only half prepared, half confident and more than a bit frenzied. Chaos is the result of a life of rushing around getting nothing quite done really, or, at all. With these lines Virginia shatters the illusion of perfectionism, which has been my greatest battle, which I still continue to grapple with daily. And now, more than ever, each day is necessary, an opportunity to be closer to fine. Because, after all, there is no need to sparkle or shine, I think, as I sit on the terrace enjoying a good cigarette; nor is there the need to be illuminated with perfection's light at my desk. In addition, friendship and the society I kept during my time of trial are only realized in its transformative power, glory, and strength only when I am alone or in the company of a woman like Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Carolyn Heilbrun, only in the words of others recognized. Others who I consider to be similar in kind to myself—my nature, my feelings, tensions and strengths and weaknesses are shared. One cannot forgive the harsh words of a friend while staring her in the face, just as one is unable to appreciate society, community, friendship, or even a good conversation—especially one in the presence of one's own kind [friends, mentors, family] in the constant midst of others. Unless the recognition of a jewel's greatness occurs in silence and in the absence of company, I cannot maintain the mental freedom or the clarity of mind that is required in today's world...in both work and play. For the two go hand in hand. Without fellowship one would have nothing interesting to write about—I surely wouldn't. Because my friends, especially those that happen to be women and are not held up by some masculine ideal that patriarchy has handed down to them for generations, allow me to see myself in relation not only to myself but to the world around me. They affirm my creativity as they inspire it. They are the angels and saints, sinners and lovers, critics and muses for whom I owe all of my gratitude and

appreciation. They remind me who I am when I forget. Not an everyday occurrence, yet there is something inexpressible about another's ability to do this that has always mystified me. But, then again it is precisely this mystification that I don't dare question. Some mysteries are divine—writing is one. My cigarette is past due so I go back inside toward a conclusion of what happens when I am finally left to feel my way through the void alone but no longer in the dark. For my friends had lighted my way. Finally, it was time.

At last, worn down by the world's weight, from all the compassion I gave, the secrets I shared, the time I spent in grief, in sorrow, in confusion, fear, anxiety, and doubt—I surrendered. Unable to move I was finally reborn.

But to have shut out life's interruptions, turned away from them, become Emily Dickinson living as a hermit would have surely killed me. So, I gave these interruptions the time, compassion, love, and fear they deserved. For if I had turned my back, misery surely would have taken hold of me and Virginia's looking-glass would have turned away from Man and settled on me—the reflection would have been magnificent and tragic, unnatural.

Back at my writing table, the one that is transforming each day into actual cherry oak, I listen in silence and hear these words as Virginia speaks to me.

If you stop to curse you are lost, I said to her; equally, if you stop to laugh. Hesitate or fumble and you are done for. Think only of the jump, I implored her, as if I had put the whole of my money on her back; and she went over it like a bird. But there was a fence beyond that and a fence beyond that. Whether she had the staying power I was doubtful, for the clapping and crying were fraying to the nerves. But she did her best.

I listen in silence and hear the voices of genius in my room, at my desk, and I think often of her who granted me this access to both mental and physical freedom revealing its importance in my life as a woman, as a writer, and as one who searches for truth: to have a room of one's own is a gift indeed. I still struggle to maintain balance between solitude and company, between freedom and control, between my impulse and my passion. Looking back, however, I know I always did my best. As I move forward, I strive toward truth knowing all I can do is my best and that is enough...

And that so to write even in poverty and obscurity is worthwhile.

* The beginning passages are direct quotes from an essay titled "A Room of One's Own" by Virginia Woolf.

Trusting the Gap

Tawnya Lynch English, Senior

"You nervous?" asked Tuck as he checked the spray skirt on my kayak.

I could hear the roar of the Coosa River from the riverbank.

"No," I lied.

He snickered and gave my kayak a pat as he pushed it down the muddy slope into the water. The liquid felt cold against my face and arms as it splashed up when the bow hit the water. Quickly checking my helmet and life vest, I paddled into the calm stretch of water where several other classmates waited.

This was the second day of a speedy three day college kayaking class and we already knew how to steer, wet exit, perform Eskimo rescues and roll. The roll, a safety maneuver that determined whether one passed or failed the class, was the most difficult. It was dangerous and a guy in the last class had dislocated his arm trying to do it. I could roll in the calm areas we practiced in, but when I experienced difficulty steering because I was too light for my kayak, the instructor told me to put water in it to weigh it down. However, this made the roll next to impossible to perform with all the extra water collecting at areas which made the kayak roll back over on itself, trapping me underwater each time.

Kyle, our group instructor, paddled up and, fastening the first aid kit behind his seat, nodded for us to follow him. His strokes were strong, propelling his kayak almost without effort. There was no sound as his paddle cut through the water, each motion practiced and natural. The other six of us trailed behind, taking heed to avoid fallen trees and protruding rocks which would easily flip our kayaks over.

I looked warily at Steven, a scrawny freshman with dark hair who hunched in his kayak, occasionally making splashing noises with his paddle so that Kyle could hear that he was attempting to follow. He wore a long sleeved white shirt which stood out from the rest of our group who wore undershirts or swimsuit tops underneath the life vests. He was the one who tipped over the most, but instead of flipping back over, he let go of his paddle and rested under the water until someone came to pull him back up. That or he pulled off his spray skirt, releasing himself from the kayak but also filling it with water so that he and the instructor had to drain it out before any of us could continue down the river. Kyle rolled his eyes each time Steven flipped over and waited to be rescued which became more and more of a common occurrence. He frequently had to fetch Steven's paddle and ferry it back to him. Although I made an effort not to follow Steven's example, I once made the mistake of panicking on the first day when I tipped over and wet exited.

Kyle now looked at me sternly before we set off

towards the river.

"I don't want to see you wet exit today."

His pointed finger at me emphasized his point. I gulped as I nodded. I couldn't make mistakes this time. Today, we were going through Moccasin Gap, a place where errors meant deadly consequences.

The water by my kayak rippled and Brian, my boyfriend, came alongside me. He had already gone through this class as well as the advanced class so he already knew the roll and rescue maneuvers. It was comforting knowing that if I needed help while Kyle was helping Steven, that there was an extra set of eyes watching out for me.

We all approached an island of rocks and docked our kayaks on the land. Greg, the team leader, was standing at its highest point.

"Okay, now we're going to learn how to whitewater swim. Watch Tuck and see how he does it."

All eyes turned to Tuck as he jumped into the water which immediately snatched him in its powerful current. He raced alongside us, floating with his arms and legs outstretched. Narrowly missing the rocks on either side of him, he reached the bend where the rapids began.

Turning over, he began to swim ferociously, kicking and grabbing the water with his arms, until he neared closer to the land where we were watching. Kyle was waiting for him with an outstretched hand and caught him. Heaving to pull him from the current, Kyle dragged Tuck from the water and they both sat on the rocks, breathing hard. Greg looked at me, smiling.

"Okay, your turn."

I walked to the edge of the rocks and prepared to jump. "Oh, and you have to make it back in. If you miss it, you'll go a couple miles down river. We'll see you tomorrow 'cause the river is too strong for us to go in after you."

I stared at Tuck. He was a large and muscular man, someone much stronger than me yet he seemed to struggle with the swim and was still recovering after his brief stint in the water.

I looked at where I should start swimming, taking note of the jagged boulders which jutted out from the bottom of the riverbed—icebergs with slimy evils lurking below. I drew a deep breath and my heart quickened, pounding even before I hit the water.

I jumped.

The water grabbed me. No, it ripped me from where I landed, pulling me underwater. I put out my arms, making myself as flat as possible to avoid rocks and trees on the river bottom. My head surfaced. My breath caught. I was already at the bend.

I flipped over and started the swim. I kicked hard, fighting the current, clawing the water in mighty strokes, but I wasn't moving. The river was fighting me, pushing

me away from the rocks that would bring me rest. I was moving away. I put forth a new effort, straining as Greg's words echoed in my ears. "The river is too strong..."

I was drifting farther away. I couldn't feel my legs. I could tell they were still kicking, but they were numb, from cold and exhaustion. My breathing was hard now.

The river was winning.

I closed my eyes and squeezed out the last ounce of energy I had left. My hands hit something solid. Rope. I grabbed it. It held me against the current, tearing into my hands as I held on. I flipped over to my back, allowing the water to rush over my neck instead of on my face. Tuck and Kyle pulled in the rope and I was on land again. My body pulsed, beating in a strong rhythm.

Greg slapped me on the back, laughing.

"Thought we were going to lose you there for a minute."

I managed a half-hearted smile, shivering while trying to catch my breath.

The water rushed by my feet, twisting, turning, exploding over the rocks, while staring at me, knowing it won its battle with me. The waters were too strong. I had no power against it.

No one did. Each person after me had to be fetched with ropes and hauled back in. The river left her mark on all of us, leaving us panting on the rocks, unable to fight back.

"And this is only a Class I rapid. Moccasin Gap is a Class III." Greg pointed downstream to the raging rapids in the distance.

I exchanged nervous glances with my classmates. As we each got settled in our kayaks once again, we all checked our helmets and tightened our life vests before setting back out into the water. The groups split up and once again, it was the six of us with Kyle in the lead.

The river was faster now. Colder. Louder.

And angrier.

It became difficult to steer and the kayaks shifted with the currents of the river. A pile of rocks rested in the middle, the water hugging it on either side. Kyle headed to the right. I followed. His strokes became quick as he paddled furiously to avoid the rocks in his path. His kayak tipped and he leaned hard to the right to counterbalance it. My eyes were fixed on him. If I kept him in my sight, I could fight my way through the gap. I couldn't hear my breathing or the splash of my strokes; the roar of the river was deafening. I paddled hard, digging the oar in the water in a struggling attempt to stay in control.

There was a flash of white at the corner of my eye as Steven's kayak flipped over. Almost without looking, Kyle turned around and paddled towards him. He passed behind me.

And I was alone.

The gap rushed at me.

Waves crashed from either side. The river hung on to my strokes, straining against me with each movement. I paddled blind. I couldn't see. I was thrown back by another wave. The kayak swiveled to its side and I swung my paddle around to straighten its course. But it was too late. I tipped and was underwater before I could take a breath.

Silence.

The world seemed to hush as the river and I battled alone, hidden from the eyes of anyone else. The roar of the rapids was muffled now. I felt the current fighting over my body.

The water was murky. I couldn't see.

I twisted my body, performing a hip snap as I pushed against the water's surface with my paddle and flipped over.

I felt the breeze against my skin as I surfaced and briefly glimpsed the bright sun over the foam of the waves. I brought my paddle up and started to stroke.

Another wave swallowed me.

Underwater again.

I snapped my hips again and clutched my paddle to bring it down on the water overhead.

But my hands were empty. I reached around for my paddle, but it was gone. I didn't know how to roll without one. I clutched the loop on my spray skirt, ready to wet exit, but Kyle's warning rang in my head. I hesitated and crouched forward.

"Crouch forward if you flip. The river bottom will take the top of your head right off," said Greg before we had left the riverbank today.

I put my hands on the bottom of my boat, a call for help. Kyle was probably helping Steven. He didn't see me turn over.

I was running out of breath.

I hit the bottom of the boat, hoping the sound would attract attention. I thought of Brian. He was behind me. He must have seen me turn over.

My chest was burning now, heaving in involuntary gasps of air which I denied with clenched teeth.

They are coming. They must be. Just a little longer. I was getting dizzy. My face tightened and I reached for the loop on my spray skirt again. I pulled, but it wouldn't budge.

I was trapped. I had no air left.

I hit the bottom of my boat again and something collided into my kayak. I felt the thump of a paddle on the bottom and I reached for my rescuer. Finding him, I hoisted myself up, but my hand slipped and the side of my head crashed into the top of the boat. I was underwater again, dazed, the area behind my ear hot, the pain spreading across my head. I felt my kayak turn over and opened my eyes.

It was Brian. He was the one who had come after me. I looked into the distance. The gap was far away now. Kyle was at the side of the river next to Steven. He looked at me and patted the top of his helmet, a sign that asked, "Are you ok?" I patted my helmet in return to affirm that I was, but winced with each tap.

The river became calm for a few miles after that and I happily slowed my strokes. I was tired and everything hurt. I was trailing the group and I soon began to question my sanity at signing up for such an intimidating course. It

seemed like a good deal to get two hours of college credit for a weekend trip, but now as I thought of the waiver I signed that I understood that I could get injured or lose my life on this trip. I was second guessing my decision, especially after nearly drowning at Moccasin Gap. That night as everyone set up their tents along the river, we set the kayaks out for the next day.

"Get a good night's sleep. We're doing the same route tomorrow," said Greg as he hauled his kayak on shore. The same route, I thought as I lied in my tent that night. I would have to ride through the Moccasin Gap again. I stared at the side of the tent, watching the shadows of the camp fires flickering. One of the guys who was still awake began to play his drum, a steady rhythm slowly increasing in tempo. The music played for hours and echoed in my dreams. It began to rain and the patterning overhead became the river, the drums its changing current. The tempo increased; the rain became harder. I could not rest, my body still feeling the rise and fall of the waves in the gap. Several times, I grabbed at the ground, trying to regain my balance, trying not to drown. And still the river coursed through my mind, a winding snake I could not escape. I swore I could feel its liquid scales against my skin. I woke up, covered in cold sweat. I looked around my tent.

The fires were out. The drums had stopped. Everyone was asleep.

Except for the river.

I could hear the hiss of its waters just a short distance away.

The river waited for me.

I resolved that today, I would not be afraid. The river had control of me yesterday and I would not let it do the same today. I would adapt to it—become one with nature's beast.

I held on to my goal as I joined the class in piling in Greg's van to go to the drop-off point up the river. I ignored my tired muscles and pushed with all my strength to keep up with Kyle as we paddled down the river. I made myself smile and tried to ignore the fatigue and bruises I felt forming.

We approached the Moccasin Gap sooner than I expected and the river quickly became faster. I gripped my paddle and followed closely behind Kyle, maneuvering through the safest route possible. But still the waves crashed and I felt myself off balance. I paddled harder, leaning forward to steady my weight. I heard two boats flip behind me. One got back up. The other stayed down. Steven probably. Kyle turned his kayak around and paddled behind me.

I was alone again.

Yesterday flooded back—flipping over, getting trapped underwater, and the battle I fought with the river—but I pushed it aside. The worst of the gap was coming now. Boulders jutted out of waters ahead, the current crashing on and around them.

"Whatever you do, don't flip near those. You'll get pinned and drown," said Kyle the previous day. I dug my paddle hard to the left and my kayak shifted, but started to tip. I leaned the other way just as a wave enveloped me. But the correction was too much. My kayak rolled and I was underwater again.

Those rocks, I kept thinking. I am right next to them. I crouched forward to avoid hitting my head and heaved

my hips to the side while swinging my paddle against the water overhead. I made it up. But there was no time to breathe. I was in the middle of the gap. I paddled hard towards the center to where the currents met. It was a pocket where I had watched the instructors paddle to and catch their breath. They still had to stroke but it was easier to keep the kayak upright as the waves came from only one direction. Reaching it, I swiveled the kayak around so that I was racing the waves head-on. It settled and I paddled hard to keep my place. Whistles sounded and I looked to my side where Tuck and his group rested in an eddy by the gap's side. They were clapping and hollering as they watched me ride the waves. I smiled, genuinely for the first time on the river. I didn't feel my muscles, I didn't feel the cold, only the exhilaration of being able to conquer the river that had for so long had me in its grip.

The rest of the kayakers were approaching and I looked to the waves behind me. Getting into this pocket was easy compared to getting out of it. I turned the kayak around in one stroke and the river grabbed me. Digging into the water, I angled myself into the current while it took me racing past those in the eddy. I paddled hard to the side, pushing all the strength I had into these last few strokes. They were getting farther away and I gripped the paddle and strained against the river with my arms, my shoulders, and my back. It took everything I had to get back to them and I docked behind the rocks where the water was calm and just breathed for a few minutes.

The breeze from the Moccasin Gap blew across my kayak and I watched the beads of the river's water travel with it. My boat bobbed up and down from the gap's waves. I synchronized my breaths to follow its pattern. It was calming. Breathing with the water, becoming a part of it. I felt my muscles relax. The tension and fear I fed off of the last few days dissipated. The gap was behind me. My group, rested, began paddle the last stretch of the river and I followed. These last waters were calm and didn't contain the fury of the gap. The current was placid underneath my kayak and I let my paddle rest over my lap for a moment. My hands were sore and blistered, but no longer shook with anticipation. They were steady and knew the river's waters now. The river had given me its strength. And I found a trust. In the gap when I was alone.

Alone with the river.

Alone with me.

I found something in that gap, the Moccasin Gap and the gap between who I was yesterday and who I was today. I found something that I had been carrying with me my entire life, but never knew until now.

I found a trust in myself.

In the middle of the waves, there was no time to think, no time to plan. I had to rely on instinct, the core of who I really was. Only when I let go and trusted myself was I no longer afraid.

As I docked the kayak and emptied it of water, I lifted it with one hand and carried it over my shoulder. I thought of just two days ago when I struggled with the weight of it and how to carry something twice my size. It balanced on my body as I made my way up the riverbank. But it was no longer heavy.

Men of God

Daniel Milton English, Senior

My father is slumped on the tattered cotton sofa that he found in the city dump when I walk into what was once our house. There's an empty Jim Beam bottle on the floor and another half-empty one in his clutch. He's passed out. A string of drool is running down his chin and there are rings under his eyes from sleeplessness or drugs or maybe both. It's a sweltering Sunday afternoon and his black and white television set is tuned to the broadcast of the local Gospel Hour. The man's clothes are dirty. His hair is disheveled. His stubble is moving far beyond five o'clock. He didn't wake when I opened the door, but for all I know he could have been ignoring me. I stare at the man that I had hated for so long wishing I could leave without saying a thing to him, but I know that I'm a different person now, and I have to show him that.

I glance around the living room of our childhood home where he drunkenly slumbers. The carpet is brown and patchy, the wall-paper is peeling; there are water-spots on the ceiling where rain has leaked through and the entire room smells like mold. Over in one corner, near the set of windows, there used to be a large oak box where my sister and I kept our toys. We carved our initials into it once. In the afternoons when we got home from school our mother used to sit on it and read to us; we sat spellbound at her feet. I remember the other corner, too. When I was ten I hit a baseball through the window and when dad found out that was where he burned me with a cigarette.

The man on the television shouts loudly, proclaiming the glory of Jesus. He speaks of the Son as being the greatest gift to us from the Father.

"Dad."

I had meant to shout it, but it felt as inappropriate as shouting in a cemetery. That is, unless you were grieving. The old man moves slightly, and then sits up. He holds a hand to his head for a second. The second passes, and he drops the bottle. He looks at me.

"What the hell are you doing here?"

"Good to see you too, dad."

He still seems a bit out of it, as he does not respond, but reaches out for the bottle of whiskey. He takes a swig, grimaces then leans back into the couch lovingly embracing his liquid escape. He looks at me, as if he's taking me in. I feel like a little boy again, being measured, but I try to shrug it away. I am a man now.

"I'm happy to see you're watching something worthwhile on television."

He looks at the shouting preacher and snorts.

"This? You think there's really anything else to watch down here on a Sunday, 'specially on basic cable? All that 'God loves you' and 'love one another' bullshit? That's too much 'love' for a straight man, if you ask me."

He squints his eyes, and smiles.

"Wait a damn minute. Ann called me the other day and told me you'd gotten into all that stuff. Is that right? You get Jesus, son?"

"Yeah dad, I guess."

I sigh, and make a mental note to call my sister and yell at her. I wanted to let him see the difference, not hear

about it. But now I had to deal with his taunting. He was laughing at me.

"Oh, you gone and done it now, son. Your name's in the book and when you die, your gonna go to a special place with bunny rabbits and skittles."

This seems all too funny to him, and he clutches his stomach and doubles over with laughter. I look away, trying to control that small bit of anger that seems to have arisen in my throat. I think of my wife at home, pregnant with our first child. She had thought this would be a good idea. His laughter subsides, and he looks at me with half a smile.

"So, you think I'm gonna go to Hell?"

His face is turning red, and I can already see his attitude turning on a dime, just like it used to.

"You think you're so much better than me now and you think I'm on my way to Hell, don't you?"

"I don't know where you're going, dad." Neither do you. I had thought that would calm him down, but now I see that it just makes him angrier. He leans forward and stares hard at me, setting his eyebrows. I can see his jaw clenching underneath the stretched skin. I used to see this same look right before he gave me bruises.

"Cause of the way I treated you and your sister when you were younger?"

"Dad, I didn't come here to argue with you. I came to see if you were alright, check up on you. I wanted to maybe just talk some, but not argue."

I'm still calm, and in control. My pity for him threatens to turn to embarrassment, perhaps anger or blame, but I won't let it. I'm above that. I've been called to a better life.

"I see now. You blame me for what happened to your mother. You still think I made her run-off."

I breathe deeply. I clench my fist. He leans back into the sofa and looks at the television. He takes a quick sip from the bottle.

"That whore had no one to blame but herself."

I grit my teeth.

"Don't talk about my mother that way."

It's low, but stern. My blood is boiling. He looks my way and smiles again.

"What if I do? What are you going to do, boy? You know why you are angry? Because I'm right. Don't blame me for that whore's insecurities."

I grab that empty bottle off the floor and heave it with all my might at his face. It hits him square in the nose and he bends over in pain. When he rises back up blood is pouring from his nose and through his fingers. His eyes are red, and tears are mixing with the blood. I watch him in pain, crying and bleeding, and I turn and leave the house without a care.

"You can leave my house if you ain't got nothing else to say."

His voice snatches me from my fantasy. I silently chide myself for even thinking about it.

"If you really cared about me or my sister, you wouldn't talk about our mother like that."

"No, if I really cared about you I'd give you an ass-whupping like I used to do when you was a kid. You remember that?"

I did remember it. He used his fists, not a

belt, though. I look into his dark brown eyes, wrinkles extending from the corners. His skin is brown like leather, and he has a small scar on his cheek he had gotten trying to build us a tree-fort when we were younger. I see hate in his eyes, and I suddenly think that that's the same kind of hate I've had for years. I want to tell him that I love him, and that I want to come around and see him. I want to tell him that we can rebuild our relationship and that we might even be able to be a family again. But I can't tell him this. I can't lie anymore.

"You see, dad, God is working in my life now, and I'm trying to be a better man. That's mostly what I want to say."

"Oh, yeah, you're a model of righteousness."

"I'm not there yet, you're right. But I'll tell you one thing: I don't owe a damn thing of it to you. You've been a lousy father and a horrible man. Bottom line, you're a worthless human being."

He looks as shocked as I feel. The words came from left field, even for me. A silence hangs in there air between us, broken only by the preacher on TV. It seems to make sense, that if the Father forgives us, shouldn't we forgive others? I stand my ground, not letting my face crack into any kind of regret. I already feel guilt eating away at my stomach. He leans back into the sofa, staring at the wall. His face looks like a mixture of emotion, and I can't tell if I really affected him or if he's starting to feel a buzz again. He looks as if he might cry, but is trying to hold it back. I tell myself it's time to leave. I just need to leave and not say another word. I'm such a hypocrite, and I need to walk away, because I can.

"Go ahead and cry for yourself dad, because no one else is crying for you."

A bird chirps outside, and the light from the sun is reflecting off the television. My heart is beating fast, and I'm not sure what to do. I have never in my life felt so low.

"Get out of my house."

It's almost a whisper when he says it. I know I hurt him, and part of me somewhere deep, deep down is rejoicing. For good measure, I kick the empty bottle across the room. I hear it shatter right before I slam the front door. I lean against a post on the porch and take an aspirin from the bottle in my coat. Tears seem to spring to my eyes, but I fight them back, just like dad. I bury my face in my hands. I am a hypocrite. I'm just as bad as him, I tell myself. There's a part of me that tries to argue, but it sounds weak at this point. A true Christian would have never acted the way I just did. I walked into that house looking for a reason not to forgive him. My heart burns with hate. Dad must have just turned up the volume on the television because I can now hear the old preacher from here. Remember, the Bible says the Father will never leave nor forsake you.

I punch the white rotted wood post as hard as I can. Skin scrapes off my knuckles and small droplets of blood drip down the back of my hand. I feel the pain extend up my arm, and I feel a little better. I walk down the porch steps and take one last look before leaving my father's house.

What Life Is All About

In Remembrance of Eric Matthew Wilson 1/18/1986- 10/21/2006

Lorena Studdt, Alumni *"This poem is to remind us of how fragile life is. Eric was a wonderful person who loved Auburn and life."*

She cried the moment she found out. He's coming! He'll soon be here!
Then three little girls all would learn, about the brother that they'd share.
She carefully heeded the doctor's advice, don't lift, strain, or bend.
She loved that little child inside, and she protected him.
She dreamed about his very first words, I wonder what they'll be?
And when I send him off to kindergarten, will he cry for me?
And what about that special day, when he learns to drive a car?
And then he'll graduate from high-school...I'm sure he'll be a star.
Then came the day that she had longed for, the arrival of her son.
Many happy tears were shed, by all who loved this little one.
Oh, Mommy can I feed him? the youngest one did say.
Then tenderly, the two oldest ones, showed her the way.
They took him home with gladness, he did his family proud.
His father thought, as he looked at him, this is what life is all about.
As the years went by, he grew and grew. So strong, so tall, yet meek.
He loved people, sports, and God; a fine young man indeed.
He thought about his future, about what life had in store.
He thought about all of the possible roads, and all of the possible doors.
He learned that some roads didn't always lead, in the direction that they should go.
Some roads led to disappointment, some led to pain and woe.
Then one day he found himself traveling, on a road like none before.
His savior called him to enter in, and he hearkened to his word.
She cried the moment she found out. He's gone! Oh, why did he have to leave?
then three young women soon found out about the brother for whom they'd grieve.
She loved him all that she could love him, she tried to protect him so.
She would've have given anything so that he would never have to go.
She dreamed about his very first words, they seemed so far away.
I wonder what his first words in heaven will be, I wonder what he'll say?
She dreamed about that first day of school, how that she cried harder than he.
And although she shed her tears inside, to all it was plain to see.
She dreamed about his look of pride when he learned to drive a car,
and when he graduated from high-school, how he sure was a shining star.
Then came the day that she had dreaded, the burial of her son.
Many sorrowful tears were shed, by all who loved this little one.
Oh, Momma! I don't want to let him go! the youngest one did say.
Then tenderly, the two older ones led her from his grave.
God took him home with gladness, he did his family proud.
His father thought, as he looked into heaven, this is what life is all about.

The Infamous Harry Schwimmer and his Adventures

Kerm Myrick English Senior

There was a loud thud on the hull of the submarine, and a pipe burst from the force of the explosion from the depth charge less than 100 yards away from the submarine. A scared ensign shouted out in terror as another depth charge exploded 300 yards to the port.

"Captain, the boat can't take much more of this! We need to dive!"

"No!" the young but headstrong captain replied. "We can't fail! We must torpedo the aircraft carrier. Bring us to a new heading and full speed ahead!"

The crew looked visibly scared as the young sailors did as they were ordered, and the captain got the aircraft carrier within his scope.

"Only a few more second men, and we'll have her. Wait for it..."

And the submarine lurched forward as a depth charge exploded 50 yards behind. Another pipe burst in the crew cabin and men scrambled to patch the pipe, holding back the sea for as long as they possibly could.

They had the aircraft carrier now the young Captain Harold Schwimmer thought. It's all mine...

And then the lights came on in the bedroom.

"Harry, why aren't you in bed?" his father asked, astonished to see his son standing with the closet door open, looking through a homemade periscope made from cardboard and a few cheap mirrors they had purchased from the dollar store. The periscope had small wooden handles on either side and the little boy spun around to look at his father as he yelled at him.

"Sorry Dad," Harold, a nine year old boy and not a fearsome submarine captain in the U.S. Navy said.

"Son, would you please get in bed," his father pleaded to his pajama-clad son.

"Yes Dad," he said as he scrambled from the closet, dropping the periscope onto a pile of clothing in his closet and hopping into his dinosaur printed sheets.

"That's better. Now I want you to go to sleep, ok son?"

"Yes sir."

"I love you," Harry's father said as he turned out the lights and shut the door behind him.

Harry's father went down the stairs as quietly as he could, trying to remember a time when Harry went to bed without any trouble. It was so long ago that it was hard. Had Harry ever gone to bed without trouble? He wasn't even sure.

"John, is everything ok?" Harry's mother asked from the couch as his foot landed on the final stair.

"Yes, everything is fine. He was playing submarine commander this evening."

"Oh, good lord!"

"I know," John said. He sat down next to her on the couch, snuggling up against her.

"Molly?"

"Yes hon?"

"Do you remember a time when Harry wasn't, you know, so active at night?"

"Yes. When he was about three days old, and after that he never ever stopped moving or crying for milk or anything. I wonder when he sleeps sometimes, and then I remember that he probably doesn't."

"Yeah, I have the same thoughts sometimes too."

She grabbed her glass of wine from the end table and took a sip while the couple lied on the couch watching TV.

Harry lied in his bed, thinking about the outcome of his submarine adventure. Had he sunk the infamous German top-secret aircraft carrier that had been heading for New York, or had the destroyers that had been chasing him with depth charges finally doomed his classified mission? He would never know now that his father had caught him playing submarine in the closet way past his bedtime.

So now he lied in his bed, under his dinosaur sheets with matching blanket in the cool air conditioning of the summertime and thought about what would come next in his adventures. Where would the infamous Harold Schwimmer end up next? Would he be flying as a legendary ace in a squadron of fighter jets battling the evil soviet empire? Or would he be in the jungles of some far-off country he couldn't yet pronounce battling the evils of communism with nothing but a machine gun and a big knife like Rambo's.

Yes, he thought. I'll be a commando in the jungle, waiting for the communist general to get out of the limousine in his convoy and enter his large mansion. I'll be waiting at the other end of a sniper scope for him, wondering how long it would take for him to get a clear shot. His buddy next to him, a guy who he'd known for years sat with a pair of night vision binoculars and saw the general's face clearly. Harry wasn't exactly sure what communists were, but they gave him an icky feeling in his stomach.

"I think we have a good shot now Harry," his buddy said. "Are you ready to take the shot?"

"What's the wind look like Jim?"

"Two clicks from the east. Negligible."

"What?"

"It means that the wind doesn't matter

Harry. You ready to take the shot?"

"Oh, right. Yeah I'm ready," the infamous Harry Schwimmer said.

He slowly squeezed the trigger, waiting for the general's head to disappear from his scope as the lights in his room came on again.

"Harry!" his father said again. This time Harry was on the floor with one of his toy dart guns, and he shot his father in the foot with the Styrofoam dart as his father yelled out his name.

"Yes Dad?"

"What are you doing? Why aren't you in bed asleep?" his father asked, agitated at his son's apparent inability to follow such simple orders as going to sleep.

"But Dad," Harry said, "I was this close to getting the evil communist general! I had him in my sights before you came in and turned on the lights! You alerted him to my presence, and now the mission has failed!"

"Harry, you have to get some sleep. We can't have you gallivanting all over your room all night pretending to kill communist generals and playing submarine. You have to get some sleep son, you have a big day tomorrow."

"Daddy, I'm not tired. And what does that big word you say mean?"

"Gallivanting? It means to run around crazy, basically."

"Oh."

"Look son, just lie down and watch a movie and go to sleep, please?"

"Ok Dad."

"Now which one do you want to watch?"

"Star Wars! Star Wars!"

Harry's Dad went over to the television that sat on his dresser, popped in the Star Wars DVD and pressed play. The screen filled with a menu, and he clicked the play button on that as well. Then the movie started, and Harry lied back in his bed and watched as the evil empire chased a diplomatic ship down with a star destroyer. Harry's eyes blinked with sleep as he watched the princess being taken away by Darth Vader.

His dreams were filled with intergalactic war as he slept. He had visions of flying a star fighter like the X-wing, shooting down the pilots of the evil Nazi empire as he fired the laser cannons at his targets, swatting them down like flies one by one. He had one on his back that he couldn't quite shake loose. Would the infamous Harry Schwimmer be defeated by the evil Lord Vader in this intergalactic war? Would he become just another notch on Vader's list of kills? No, he thought. Not tonight I won't!

He did a quick 180 in space, flying erratically so Vader couldn't get him. No, he thought. This infamous Nazi wasn't going to shoot me down. I'll get him this time. As he thought this, three more nazi star fighters came at him from the front, their laser blasters blowing away everything in sight before he could react. One shot hit his wing, but it wasn't badly damaged. He was going to continue to live to fight another day. Harry now had Vader in his sights after a few more maneuvers of aerial beauty, and he fired his laser cannons. He had him, or so he thought.

John came back down the stairs again, assured of his son's sleep. He found his wife asleep on the couch, the glass of wine on the end table empty. He knew she'd always been a cheap drunk. There was a bad game show on TV, and he sat down on the couch and found the remote under her head. He gently removed it and changed the channel.

"Hey, I was watching that," she said.

"Too bad."

"Give it back!"

She hit him with a throw pillow, and he tackled her back down on the couch and tickled her. She yelled.

"Stop it John! You'll wake him up!"

"Nah, he's out like a light. He was snoring by the time I left his room."

"What did you put on tonight?"

"Star Wars."

"Oh no, not the Nazi Lord Vader."

"Yes, I know, it's not what you would have wanted to pick. But if it puts him to sleep, then I guess we can't complain."

"What ever happened to bedtime stories?"

Molly asked,

"Our son is what happened to them."

"You know, your mother told me that you were just as bad as he was."

"You lie," John said.

"Nope, I'm telling the truth. Scouts honor."

"I don't remember being a hellion."

"According to your mother, she was lucky to get you into the bed on some nights, and when she did there was a requirement of two bedtime stories by both her and your own father."

"Ah yes, Robin Hood and his merry men were one of my favorites."

"So see John? This is all your fault."

"How so?"

"Genetic predisposition."

John got off the top of her and reclined in the corner of the couch, his arms stretched out. Molly moved to lay her head into his lap, and she shut her eyes.

"Honey?"

"Yes?"

"Harry really isn't that bad, is he?"

"No," Molly said. "And I know. Tomorrow night it's my turn to put him to bed."

"Dang right it is."

The morning came, and John was in his robe, looking at his sleeping son in the early morning light of a new day. He had a cup of coffee in his hand and needed a shave. He had strange dreams the night before, dreams of being a pirate captain on the high seas, surely the same type of dreams he'd had when he was a child the same age as Harry. He put them out of his mind and went over to Harry's bed.

John shook Harry awake. They had a big day ahead of them.

"Dad? What time is it?"

"It's time to go leave for the baseball game in the city. You need to get up now and get dressed."

"Do I have to Daddy? I was just about to kill the evil Nazi Lord Vader!"

"Sorry son, maybe tomorrow night. Come on now, rise and shine little one. Time to get dressed and see the Braves play."

"Ok Dad," Harry said, and he leapt out of bed with energy. Harry's father saw his son do this, and wished that he had the energy that his son had. Maybe one day Harry won't have this sort of energy, his father thought, but then pushed it out of his mind and went to the kitchen for another cup of coffee.

His father stood at the coffee pot, pouring himself another cup when he heard a creak on the wood of the kitchen floor, and saw another assassin with an

assault rifle pointed straight at him. The assassin started to fire, spraying bullets wildly with the silenced weapon hoping to kill the infamous Robert Schwimmer before breakfast. Robert then turned and pulled a 9mm Beretta from under the counter of the island that sat in the middle of the kitchen and fired at the assailant's head, taking careful aim and watching his foe fall to the ground in a dead heap not fifteen feet away from his waiting son.

"Daddy? What are you doing?" Harry asked as he saw his father crouched behind the counter with one of his play Nerf guns.

"Oh, nothing son. You ready to go?"

"Yeah Dad, I'm ready."

And with that, father and son left the kitchen and went into the garage, taking off in the intergalactic spaceship on another adventure where they would battle against unknown foes and befriend highly advanced alien civilizations in the far off reaches of Atlanta, Georgia.

Solitaire

Lauren Mikus Interior Design, Freshman

"I had two questions in mind when I wrote this essay in ENGL 1100. What happens when an essential half of a pair is missing? How does one cope?"

I open the paper packaging covered in oriental designs. Out come two long, wooden sticks. They begin narrow and slightly widen for the appropriate grip. I take one and rub the other to smooth out any nicks in the wood. I assemble them properly in my palm and reach for my first bite. The white rice is a blanket for the vibrant orange tuna, green avocado, and red fish eggs. The fresh sushi amuses my taste buds and I swallow it down.

After enjoying a few pieces, I put the utensils down to talk with Sam, my new boyfriend. Reaching for the glass, my elbow hits the sticks and one falls to the floor. I glance down at the mysterious carpet and decide to ask for another pair. The kind waitress agrees and walks toward the kitchen. I sit there looking at my single chopstick and realize how useless it is now that the other one has fallen on the ground. It does not matter that it's clean and conveniently positioned next to my plate. Even if I want use it, I can't, because the sticks are only functional as a pair.

I hear bits and pieces of the other customers' conversations. Glancing to my right, I cannot help but notice the woman a couple tables over. Her sleek hair is wrapped tightly in a bun showcasing a pair of elegant jewels dangling from her ears. They reflect the light and sparkle as she moves in towards the handsome man across the table. She is an image of beauty and grace. All her features are so symmetrical that you could trace straight, equal lines between them; and the jewels compliment that pattern flawlessly. Her date, an obvious catch, listens intently to what she is saying. I can tell she is used to being the center of attention. But secretly I know that beneath that layer of confidence she exudes so well, his approval is very important to her.

When it comes to pairs, none can measure up to my grandparents. They used to spend every waking minute together. Their routine consisted of grocery shopping and then cooking up a big meal, even though it was usually just the two of them. But the highlight of the night was always cards. He'd hang his hat on the right side of his chair as he shuffled and dealt. This was an indication of his sole focus on the game. Gin Rummy, Bridge, Hearts, you name it; they played it. Grandpa had a competitive spirit but couldn't resist her smile, so you can imagine who won. He always called her "dear," even when he was frustrated. I watched them a few times, it was pure romance.

The beauty leans over her bowl of steaming miso soup to take a bite and her earring comes loose and falls in. Plop! A few drops splash up on her face and her expression dramatically shifts to disgust. She quickly hides behind her napkin and dabs off the liquid while her date smiles nervously. I hear him trying to assure her that there was no harm done. But his comforting gestures are useless; she is absorbed in her own world. Dissatisfied with her compact mirror, she rushes to the bathroom to repair the damage. The man shakes his head and stares blankly out the window.

Our waitress returns with a regretful look. There is not another chopstick to be found, the birthday party in the next room over has taken the rest. How do you run out of eating utensils at a restaurant? I laugh at the idea of poking the fish and eating it like a kabob. That would only end badly; I think to myself, I would be the girl with soy sauce down her white shirt playing with her food like a four year-old. But it's apparent that I do not have another choice. So I leave the remaining pieces sitting there for a while but my cravings don't subside. Taking a quick look around to make sure no one was watching, I

push the stick right through the middle. The raw meat gushes out of the center and barely makes it to my mouth. Embarrassment wells up inside me, but Sam just looks at me and laughs. "You gotta' do what ya' gotta' do," he says, playfully holding my hand from across the table. He then reaches up to pinch my nose. Now we are both laughing. There is this kindness in his eyes that I know isn't going anywhere and my inhibitions cannot help but surrender to the wave of comfort that rushes over me.

My grandpa's been gone for three years now. When I go visit I sit across the table from Grandma in his seat. Her home is merely a survival kit. Only some of the groceries make it to the cupboard. The daily newspapers are slightly crinkled. I can tell she attempted them. The television remains on in a low volume; just enough to break the palpable silence. That hat is still hanging from the right side of the chair. His scent still faintly lingers in the air. Sometimes her agony is so evident that it pierces through me as if it was my own. My helplessness infuriates me. There is no solution, no replacement for her loss. I recognize that the one thing I can do is just be there. I watch her with the cards spread out across the table and hope for a victory. She's still trying to beat Solitaire.

No Bugles, No Drums

Kevin Myrick English, Senior

"This essay was written for Dr. Hammersmith's Personal Essay class and was inspired completely by memories of my youth and by how imagination works."

It was the autumn of 1992 and my parents decided that it was time to take a late October camping trip to Fort Mountain, Georgia. Nestled at the foot of the Appalachian Mountains, the Fort Mountain state park is complete with campgrounds, large boulders and a lake. My parents took my sister and me to places like this all of the time when we were kids. We went to the Biltmore Estate, the beach, and to museums and national battlefields. Thus, it was the usual story of our travels, or so it seemed when we left the house.

The whole weekend began with a disaster. My father, in his haste to pack up our Isuzu Trooper and get us on the road forgot to check the tent bag to make sure that the poles were included. Three hours later my mother and father were both at their boiling point of anger while my sister and I explored the campground area, roaming around a world we'd never seen before. It was almost like being in a fairy tale, and I secretly wondered if the big bad wolf would appear from nowhere and try to gobble up my sister in her sweatshirt and jeans. Alas, there was no wolf and my sister wasn't little red riding hood. My dreams of her being swallowed and becoming an only child were dashed on the rocks of the river of reality. I do not wish any ill harm on my sister, but as a child my fantasies and dreams were a bit insane.

The rest of this family trip, much like most other family trips I've taken in the rocky years of my childhood, was a blur. We went on a long Saturday nature hike on one of the trails and then me and my family went down to the lake. We snuggled together that Saturday night in the tent after eating a fire cooked meal of steaks and baked potatoes. On Sunday morning we awoke and after a breakfast of pancakes and bacon made over the campfire, I fell into the lake that sat atop Fort Mountain. My sister and I had gone down to the lake after breakfast while my parents cleaned up the dishes from breakfast and decided to play a game off of the dock. We were seeing who could get our long sticks found in the woods a few minutes before to hit the bottom at the deepest point. I must have leaned too far off the dock, because I fell into the lake, diving in like a swan diving into the water. I must have been in the water for only a few seconds, but to my childhood mind it seemed like minutes flailing for dear life in the cold, murky water.

I have been both blessed and cursed by an overactive, dreamy imagination. Even from my younger days living in North Georgia, I had elaborate playtime fantasies. I would always conjure up imaginary foes in the concrete walls of the basement, fending them off with a thick yard stick. Imagine for a moment a young boy running around in his backyard holding a toy musket and wearing a confederate hat in the autumn charging against the unseen Yankee ranks into the woods. This was what I did with my playtime in my childhood. I imagined

things that weren't there, running around the backyard with a football by myself in the fall wishing I was the star running back for Auburn and scoring the game-winning touchdown against Alabama. It might sound childish, but I found that my mind, for all of its fantasy, could provide enough entertainment to keep my young self out of trouble.

Some of this, I'll admit, was a product of the movies I watched as a kid. And some of it was just my mind conjuring up whatever it is I wanted to believe that I could be in the moment. It didn't matter what time period or situation. I was always imaging myself doing something other than being a kid. Even during the turbulent years of my puberty and even now when I have begun to find myself in both my life and in my writing, my imagination runs wild. Every word, every sentence and every full-fledged idea I've ever had has in some part come from my overactive imagination. This ability to conjure up whole fantasies is both a blessing from the gods and a curse from the fates, at any given time twisting me from happiness to realizing that I've completely neglected some other area of my life during the middle of the day while daydreaming.

In this respect, it is a blessing. It gives me a plethora of ideas to draw from and contribute to in writing short stories and a full-fledged novel. I'm able to draw from somewhat realistic scenes that I've created in my head and put them into words on a page, letting the reader see and feel every scene, smell the world that I create and touch the faces of the characters that I bring into this world. With my imagination, I'm a father to a whole race of people who don't exist, a lord of a domain that has no place and a god of a universe that exists only on a page and in my mind. While sometimes in my writing a conflict may sometimes not be easily seen, the unique style I try to create in these stories are still there and I'm able to find the conflict in some cases easier because of my overactive imagination.

But then, it becomes a curse. My overactive imagination can never be turned off, and no matter where I am I find myself sometimes drifting into a world that I didn't mean to drift. Imagine for a moment the best times in life, like winning a Pulitzer Prize for writing or giving a speech before thousands of people who show respect and value to what you have to say. Or imagine that you have the power to do anything that you want to, or that every dream you've ever had can come true. This is the inside of my head, most of the time ignored, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And sometimes, I actually begin to believe the fantasies and think that maybe I can do whatever I want to do in this world, that I have the power and drive to win a Pulitzer Prize or to kayak on the Colorado River. But reality always comes crashing down on my head, and I always end up on the rocks in the swift river, struggling to get back to shore and the safety of the real world.

It doesn't help that it is embarrassing sometimes to be caught in a fantasy. Whether it is in class staring out the window or on the phone with someone and not paying close enough attention, I have found myself apologizing many times for not hearing the question or for not giving my full attention to a subject. There was also the incident where as a child playing the basement I broke a mirror. Instead of telling the truth to my parents, I told them that I must have bumped it while coming to the door back upstairs and it fell on the floor. Embarrassing moments like these are especially hard to shake off when I realize that if I hadn't been in the dream world, I might have been able to come up with a coherent answer to a question or say something insightful. Instead, I find myself sitting on the sidelines of life in moments like these, staring into the distance and pretending, not at all within my complete control, that I'm somewhere else in this world.

Let's return to the scene in the lake. I'm the flailing small boy splashing in the cold, murky water who briefly finds himself submerged, and then I find myself on the shore. I don't remember much of the whole situation because I was panicked and in shock from the cold water, but from that day forth for many years, I had the most fanciful stories about that quick dip into the lake. My parents obviously were mad at me and my sister, and the trip was cut short because we didn't have an extra change of clothes for me to wear and I rode home in the back seat wearing my sister's long johns and thinking about what happened. What happened next has become a bit of family legend, and for that I'm solely responsible. According to my family members, I've always been an excellent storyteller; I did what any storyteller with an overactive imagination does, and I embellished the story beyond what could have been even remotely possible.

At first, the story of my trip into the water included seeing a solitary turtle lying in the mud on the bottom of the lake. Even though it was cold that time of the year, and the water very murky, it was slightly possible that I might have seen a hibernating turtle or something like that. But as the story kept being told in front of me, the amount and variety of aquatic animals became larger. From the first turtle, it became a turtle and a water moccasin. Then it went from a turtle and a snake to two turtles, a snake and a few catfish. And from there, things spun out of control. It ended with four turtles, three snakes and a whole school of catfish, and finally my family stopped telling the story. It has, of course, remained in the family memory as the time I fell in the lake. And even though my overactive imagination might have turned a bad memory into a funny story, it has at least stuck into my memory as the first great story I've ever told. A product of fantasy and an almost fatal situation, things turned out okay. And as we left Fort Mountain, I rode in the back seat shivering and playing with small toy jets, imagining the jet bombing an Iraqi troop column on the seat.

Paratus Omnia

Bonnie Jean Shamp English, Senior

"What are you, a Boy Scout or something?" a friend asked recently as I pulled a Band-Aid and some Neosporin out of my purse for a cut on his hand.

"No," I replied. "I wanted to be in it, but they wouldn't let me in. It probably had something to do with my being a girl." I laughed and changed the subject. I have heard the Boy Scout comment before. Often, in fact. My friends laugh and tell me I am over-prepared every time I produce my sewing kit or Swiss Army Knife for some minor operation such as trimming a snagged thread or extracting a splinter. Yet at other times they display a mild sort of amusement at my absentmindedness and my failure to have with me more predictable supplies: a pen or a stamp, for instance. I may carry around tea bags and bandages in my backpack, but in the event of a sudden thundershower, I frequently find myself dashing through the parking lot without the protection of the poncho or umbrella I ought to have been carrying.

I have been like this for as long as I can remember. Ever since I was little, I have been concerned with preparedness. In my childhood days, preparedness was my pastime. From the time the weather turned warm enough to stay out of doors without our hands turning blue until the winter frosts began again, my siblings and I, along with some neighborhood children, took up residence in the Kudzu Fort. Since we lived in Alabama, Kudzu Fort season lasted from about mid-March through mid-November, and every day after school (or all day long during the summer), we congregated until dark, busying ourselves with fort affairs. The Kudzu Fort was little more than a copse of overgrown privet trees over which vines of kudzu had spread, enclosing the area beneath a canopy of unruly green growth. The canopy, at its highest point, was about twenty feet above the ground, and the space divided itself naturally into a number of chambers between which hedges of fledgling shrubs grew. These chambers we dubbed with names appropriate to a fort: the Great Hall, the armory, the kitchen, the guard post, and the bedchamber. It was not a tree house or a playhouse; it was a fort, and our continual task was to equip it as such.

The first summer (the summer after I turned nine) was spent primarily in outfitting the rooms. We strung up a hammock in the bedchamber and appropriated some hefty logs to serve as rude chairs for the Great Hall; these we arranged in a circle for council meetings. We gave ourselves such offices as befitted our fort. My sister, my elder by four years and our de facto leader, was made Duchess. My seven-year-old brother, the most warlike among our number, was appointed captain of the guard, a role he performed with gusto, continually arranging new defenses for the fort and staging reconnaissance missions down to the nearby creek. As for me, since they could not think of any title more suitable, and since I happened to be fond of counting and rearranging the spears in the armory, they named me sergeant-at-arms.

After the initial outfitting of the fort, we spent most of our time in preparation. Exactly what we were preparing for, I never quite figured out, but that

didn't seem to bother me much. We cut down privet branch after privet branch, fashioning rough spears with our pocketknives. We stockpiled the spears in rows in the armory in the event that we needed them. Our father, a retired Green Beret, looked with approval on our efforts when he stopped by for an occasional visit. "Paratus Omnia," he would say sententiously, nodding solemnly with his hands clasped behind his back. "Prepared for all things." He would proceed to perform an informal inspection, surveying our defenses and weapon stockpiles and offering advice for improvements. We would hasten to incorporate his suggestions: adding a secret entrance here, deepening a mêlée pit there. And I beamed with pride whenever he gave us that solemn nod of approval and uttered those two magical words: *paratus omnia*.

My father's emphasis on preparedness was evident from an early date. He presented me with my first pocketknife at the age of five. The blade was about two and a half inches long, and its enamel handle was decorated with a picture of a budding rose. It may have seemed that I had little use for it, and indeed I rarely used it for the sorts of things my later knives were used for. Instead of carving spears, I cut slices of apple for myself as I sat on the front porch and watched the older kids walking home from school. The important thing, though, was that I had the knife: I was prepared for any emergency that could be overcome by a five-year-old with a pocketknife.

It was with this knife that I carved my first spear under the watchful eyes of my father, with careful instructions about how to hold the blade and not cut myself. He was careful about that sort of thing, but he had a first-aid kit on standby, just in case. My first knife gave way to others, and I knew my father was extremely pleased when I showed more enthusiasm for my first Swiss Army Knife than many would feel the occasion warranted. I spent that afternoon on the porch, investigating. I unfolded each blade and tool and held the knife up to watch the sun reflect in its gleaming steel. Here were all sorts of tools I had never encountered in a knife before: scissors, a corkscrew, a saw, and an awl, among other oddities. There was even a toothpick built into the shiny red plastic handle. In the event that I was stranded on a desert island, I would be prepared to uncork a bottle of wine and take up leatherworking in addition to building a raft. He expanded my informal lessons to include sawing techniques and leather repair.

Seeing my father's pleasure when I took interest in such activities, I quickly learned to ask for the right sorts of things. I would ask for a first-aid kit or a sleeping bag or a new knife, and he would always make sure I got one. It wasn't that he wouldn't have bought me a doll or a new dress if I had asked, but I didn't ask. He clearly had more fun buying me a new Swiss Army Knife than a new Barbie, so that's what I asked for. Eventually, his obsession with being prepared rubbed off.

Preparedness became a habit. Soon it wasn't enough just to have a pocketknife. I began to carry other things as well. At one point in around the second grade,

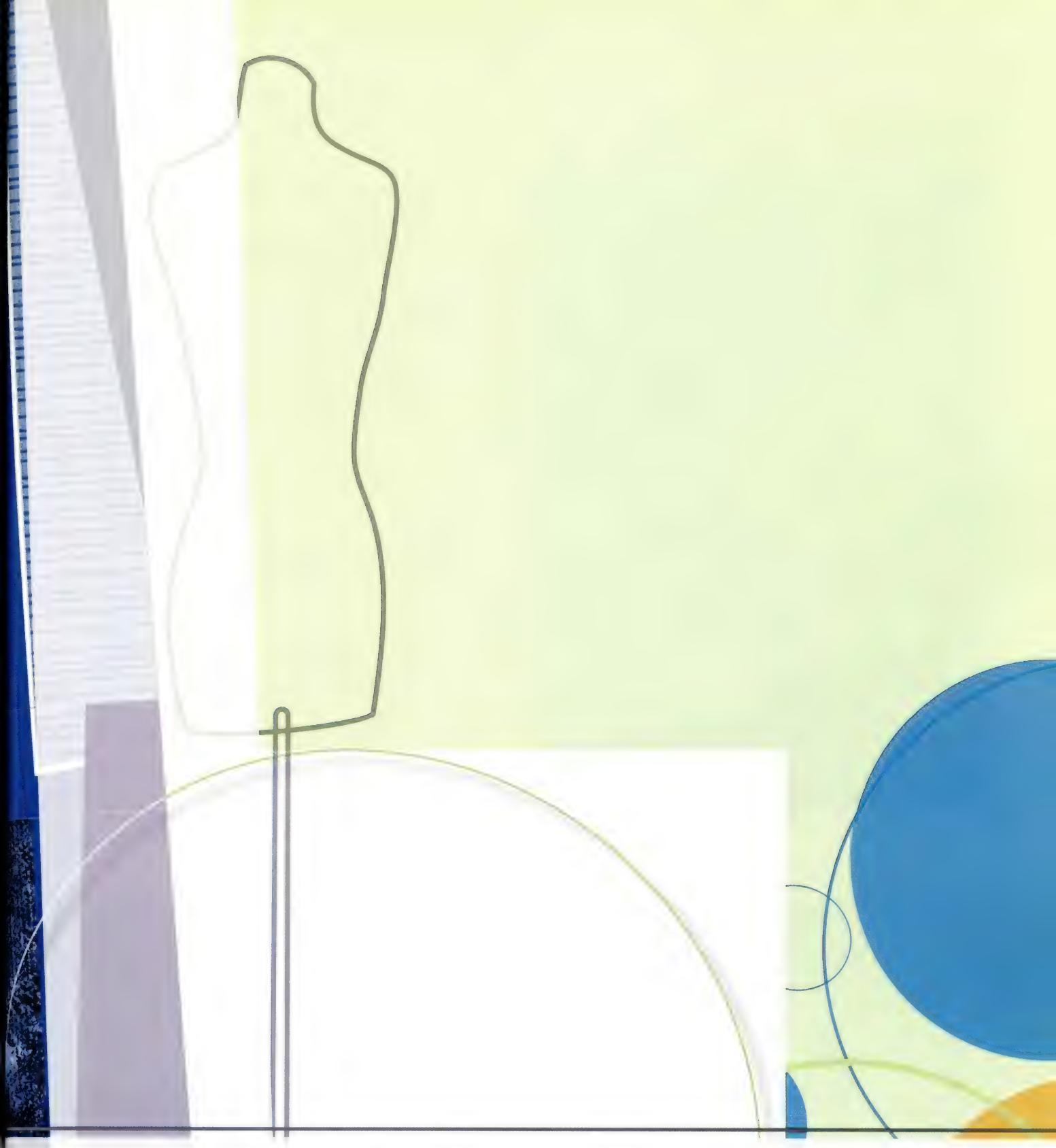
I even compiled a survival kit which I carried with me at all times. I filled an empty Band-Aid tin with assorted "essentials," items that I figured would get me through any emergency: a Band-Aid, a quarter for the telephone, a candle, some matches I had waterproofed myself, some packets of sugar, and a small metal spoon. Exactly what emergency would require this odd assortment of items never seemed to have crossed my mind. Perhaps I would need to use the spoon to dig a hasty foxhole in which I would shelter by candlelight, dining on raw sugar and bandaging a shrapnel wound with the Band-Aid.

But the funny thing was that it didn't matter if I knew what I was preparing for. I was supposed to be prepared—that much I knew—and it was enough. But the odd result was that I never ended up being prepared for the right things. In class I would have to borrow a pencil and sheet of paper from a classmate. Had the school been taken over by terrorists, I would have been prepared to stage an assault with my knife and some improvised weapons. I was not, however, prepared for an Algebra quiz.

That's not to say that my odd supplies didn't come in handy once in a while. When I was on a choir trip in the eighth grade, I was able to lend a hand when our accompanist's pants split down the seam; using my portable sewing kit, I quickly mended the tear. But those occasions were few and far between. More often than not, I ended up carrying around a lot of stuff I never had occasion to use. I still do. But I can't seem to break the habit. I've worried about being prepared for so long that I can't stop. I see a first-aid kit and convince myself that I need to buy it. At last count, my apartment contained four.

But somehow I suspect that my recurring desire for a new first-aid kit or package of emergency candles may have little to do with a deep fear of some unforeseeable emergency. It may have more to do with that image of my father, all those summers ago, nodding solemnly and approvingly as he uttered the magic words: *paratus omnia*. The words were magic because they were inextricably linked with that approving nod. I learned over time to connect preparedness with my father's approval: if I practiced the former, I would obtain the latter. So I assembled survival kits and stockpiled first-aid supplies and waited for nods of approval. It wasn't that I was worried about an emergency; most of the time I had no idea what sort of emergency I was even preparing for. It was that I thought being prepared would win me my father's approval.

I don't carve spears anymore; my siblings and I abandoned the Fort a long time ago. But I still carry a sewing kit and a first-aid kit in my purse, and I show a keen interest whenever my father shows me some new survival items he has purchased. He asked me last week what I wanted for my birthday. I told him I could use a new Swiss Army Knife.



{design}



1 *The Sunflower Project poster*
Joshua Swindle
Graphic Design, Senior
"This poster is for a non-profit organization whose sole mission is making the world a more beautiful place through the power of sunflowers."

2 *"Booties and Bonnets"*
Holly Cook
Graphic Design, Senior
Poster for Sav-A-Life Organization

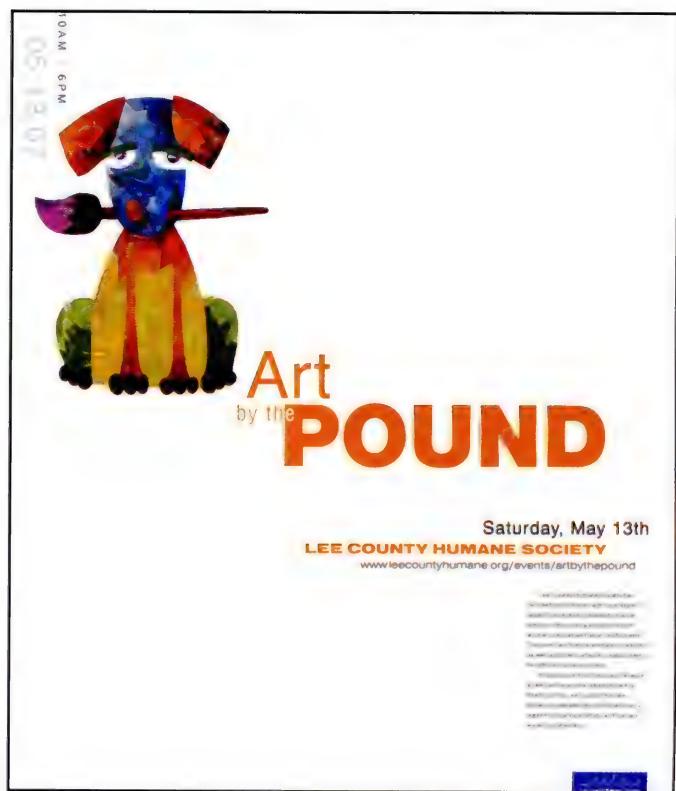


3 Art by the Pound Poster

Ashley Key

Graphic Design, Senior

"This is a promotional poster for Art by the Pound which is an art benefit for the Lee County Humane Society."



3

4 Darfur Awareness Poster

Brett Olive

Graphic Design

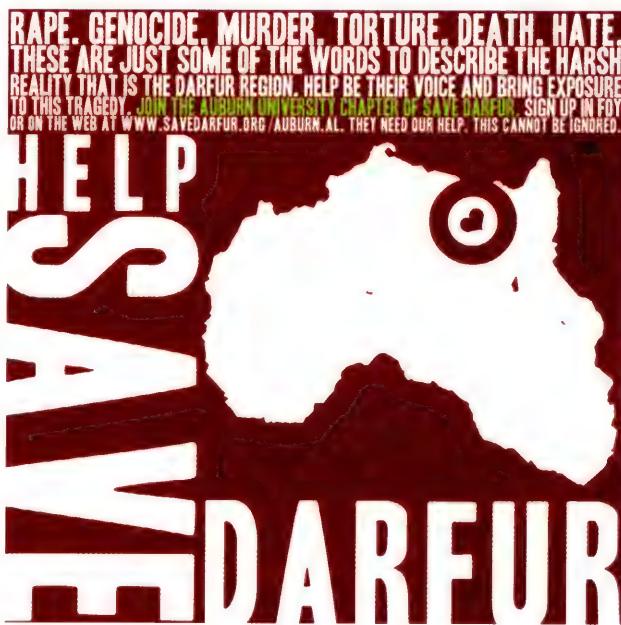
"The poster was designed to raise awareness of the harsh conditions of the Darfur region. Its purpose was to join Auburn students to join the Save Darfur Auburn Chapter."

5 Eat Ours Poster

Amanda Elliott

Graphic Design

"Eat Ours is a poster for the promotion and education of organic fruits and vegetables. The sassy headline and playful typography bring a dull subject to life."



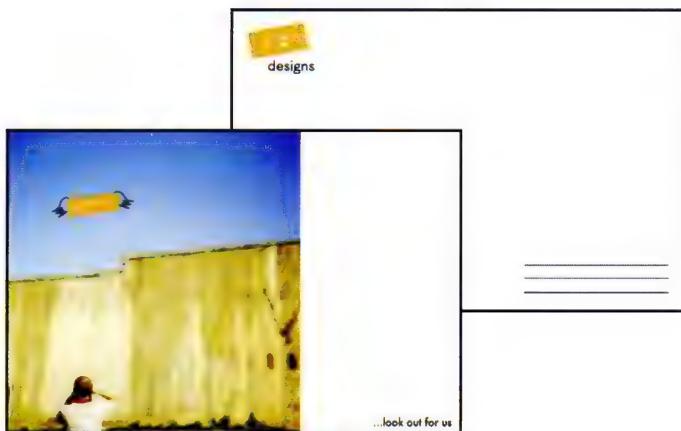
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1 *Formula Logo*
Shelly Moore
Graphic Design, Senior

2 *EDT Postcard*
Erin Warner
Graphic Design, Senior
"This postcard is a leave-behind for the self-promotional design firm "edt designs."

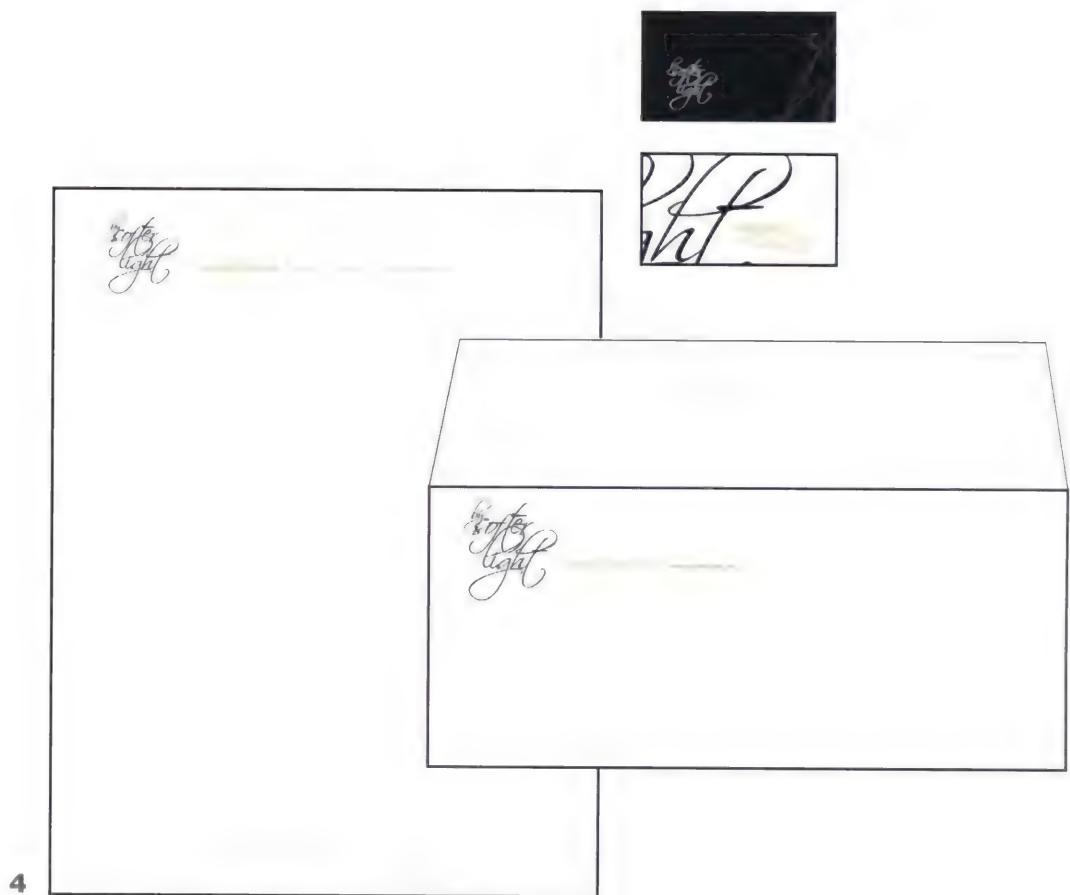
3 *Auburn Bulletin Cover*
Stephen Formica
Fine Art, Senior
"2007-2008 Auburn Bulletin Cover."

4 *By Solfter Light identity*
Joshua Swindle
Graphic Design, Senior
"Identity for a candle company. The packaging for the candles is colorful, therefore a focus on the production of light and linear qualities of the wick were incorporated into the design."

5 *Mugshots Identity*
Lindsey Williford
Graphic Design, Senior
"Mugshots is a coffee and martini bar inspired by the Chicago mobster era. The goal of the identity is to fuse the two different types of beverages into being available at one unique place while conveying a sense of the mobster historical period."



3





1 Sweet T Clothing Company T-shirts
Ashley Key
Graphic Design
"These t-shirts were created to portray the essence of the south through color, food, and tradition."

2 Hints of the Holidays Hot Cocoa Mix
Emily Krenkel
Graphic Design, Senior
"Package Design for Holiday Inspired Hot Cocoa."

3 Death by Chocolate
Yukti Sancheti
Integrated Apparel and Textile Science
Grad Student
"Fabric swatches were handed to us, as a part of one of the assignments. The inspiration came from the yummy chocolatey colors of these fabrics."

4 English Garden
Yukti Sancheti
Integrated Textiles and Apparel Science
Grad Student
"The inspiration for this piece came from the 'Anglomania' exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The colors of the dress are inspired from the soft undertones of an English garden."



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1 Fashion Illustration of Cruchin' Candies

Erin Onofri

Junior

AMDP and French Language

"This sketch is of a dress designed by Erica Marie Davis for the International Textiles and Apparel Association Annual competition in 2005. The entire dress was made out of candy bar wrappers! I chose to use actual candy bar wrappers in the sketch because it gave the drawing a more unique and realistic feeling."

2 Runway Finale

Runway Finale
Courtney Harper

*Southern Harper
Apparel Merchandising, Design, and Production Management
Senior*

"I wanted to show the fluidity of fabrics along with the structure of garments. I accentuated the soft lines and colors of the watercolor paint with harsher oil pastel lines to show how flowing fabric and structure coincide."



2

3 Series of Fashion Sketches
Krista Carlin
Apparel Merchandising Design
and Production, Junior



Krista Carlin
10/11/06

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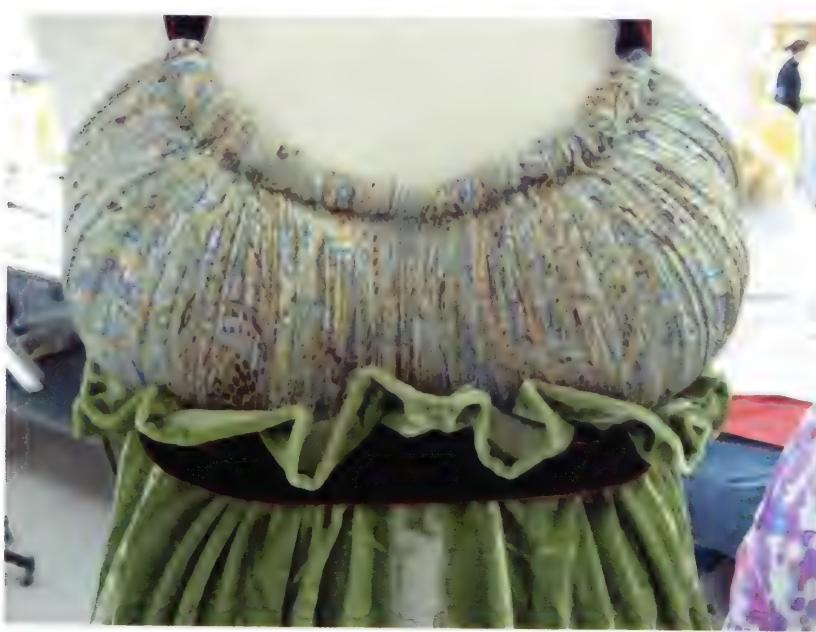
Krista Carlin
10/11/06



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1 Bustle it Up

Erin Onofrio

Apparel Merchandising and Design Production

and French Language, Junior

"As an apparel design major we were asked to created an original fabric design and create a dress. I chose to create 3 different types of fabric; a tie dye, dyed denim stripes, and a bleached denim. My goal was to create a dress that incorporated all 3 fabrics. The inspiration began with the idea for a Marie Antoinette bustle-style dress. The stripes were one of the main focuses of the dress which I incorporated through the garment in the bustle, straps, and waistband. The straps were created to imitate icing. As the piece developed the entire look came together to give a Nightmare Before Christmas twist to a dress from the 1700's."

2 Haute Mamair

Megan Barganier

Apparel Design and Production, Senior

"Knowing that maternity wear had yet to be tackled in my program, I was inspired and challenged to create a garment for expectant mothers that would be both functional and enjoyable to wear. The bodice features over 300 pin-tuck leafs and the skirt's fabric was dyed by hand and its velvet fibers, burnt out by hand, leaving a chandelier pattern visible in the remaining silk fibers."

3 Poinsettia

Terran Wilson

Architecture, Junior

"A scaled colored pencil rendering of a poinsettia leaf as a response to an assignment for studio."

4 Leaf Rendering

Evan Forrest

Architecture, Senior

5 Leaf Rendering

Michael Anglisano

Architecture, Senior

6 Leaf Rendering

Brett Jones

Architecture

Sophomore



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6

1 *Butterfly Center for Calloway Gardens*

Dinithi Iddawela

Architecture, Junior

"Inspired by the geometry and the organic sense of an egg crate. Through that I tried to create an image of a butterfly spreading its beautiful wings. The design is a 7,000 square foot tropical home for butterflies."

2 *Religious Expression: an Intuitive Inquiry into Church Design*

Sean Carter

Architecture, Senior

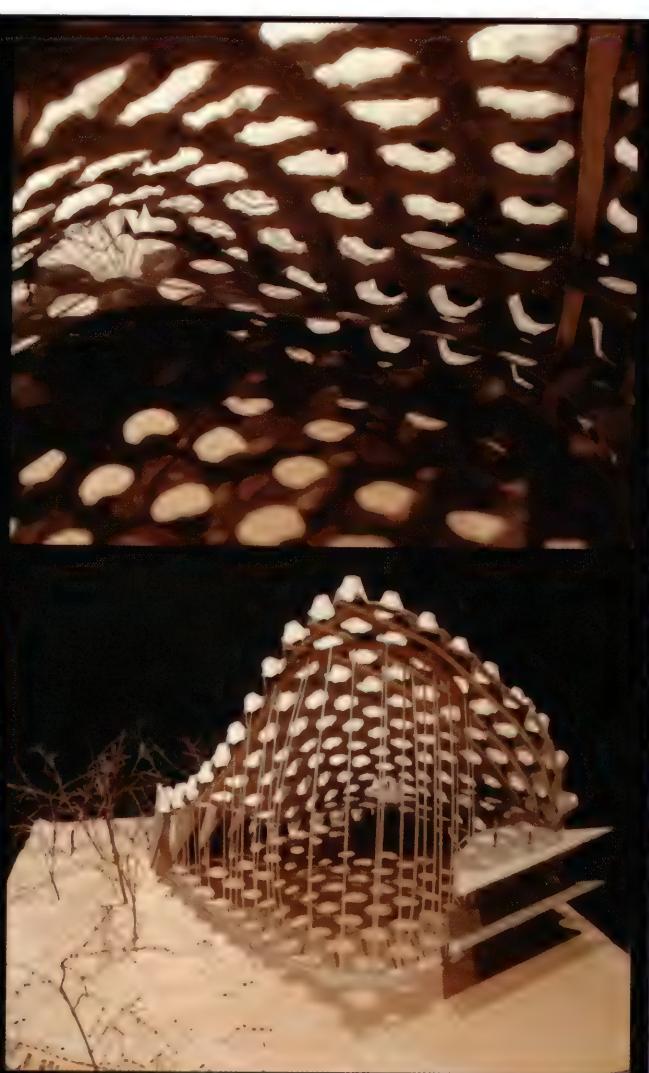
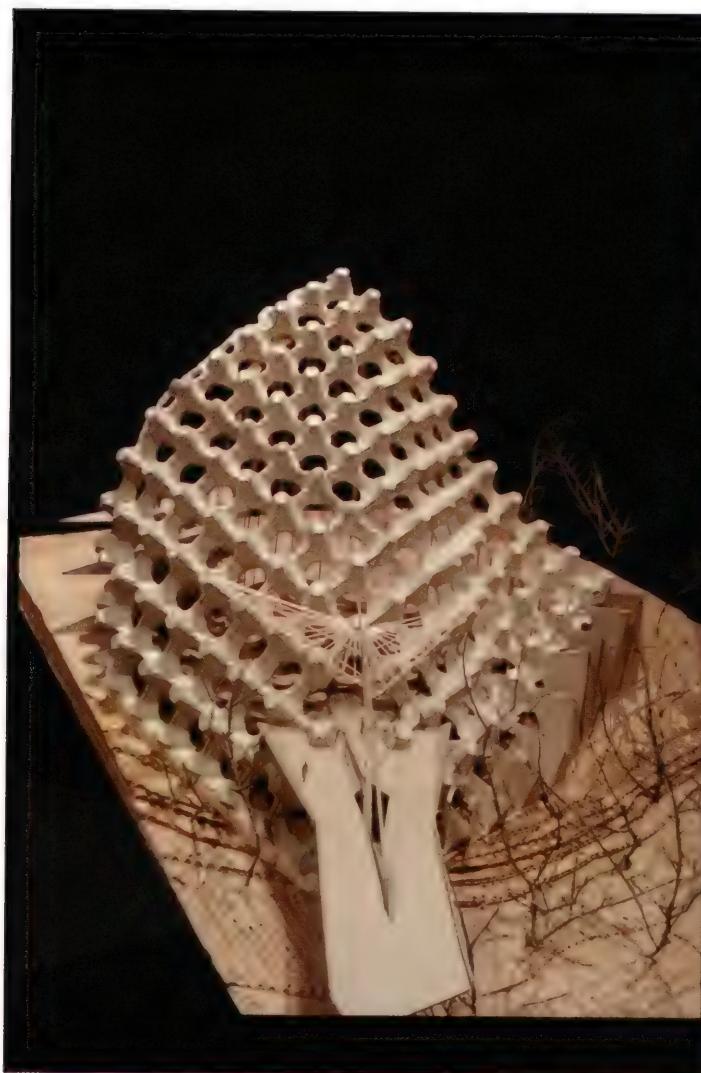
Architecture may more aptly be described as process than object, with this in mind, an intuitive approach to the design was deemed appropriate to the programmatic requirements of a church. The project's whimsical and expressive design is metaphor to the jubilant and renewing sense of embrace one expects to experience during an ideal Romantic encounter in the presence of God.

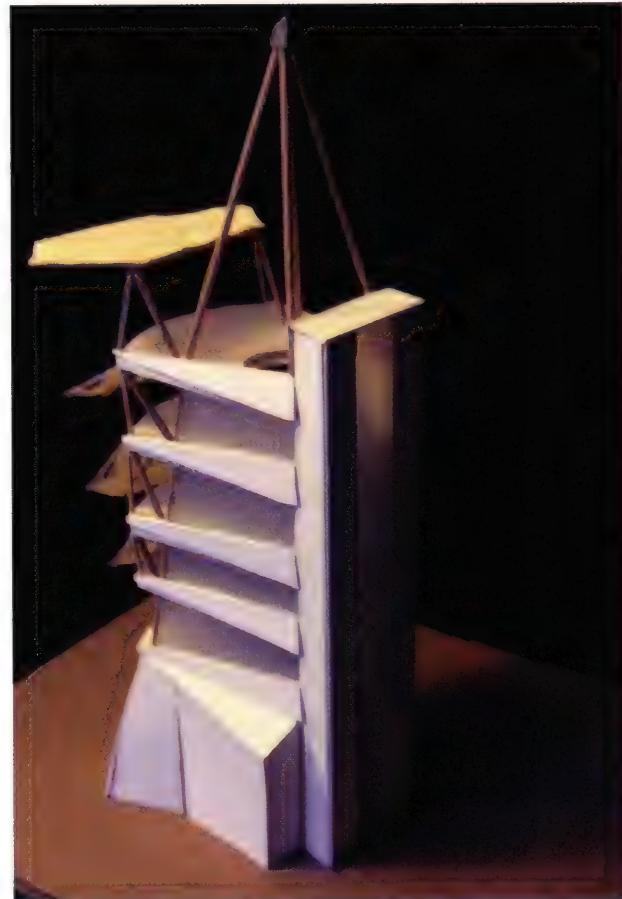
3 *Tectonics of Flight: an empirical approach to observation tower design*

Sean Carter

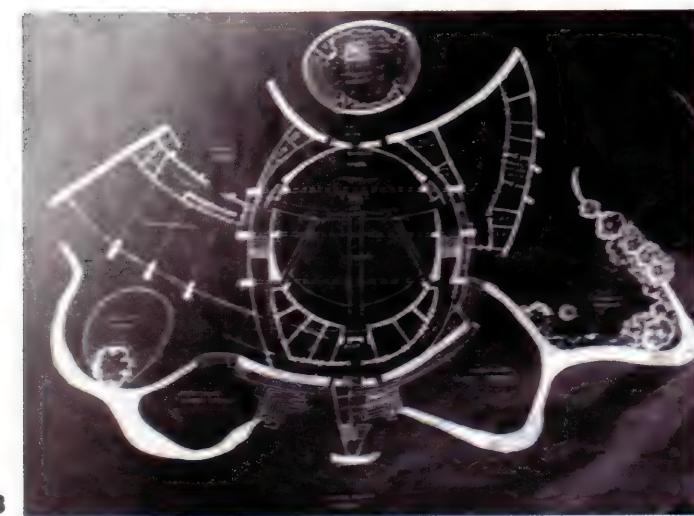
Architecture, Senior

"Having no programmatic requirements aside from those necessarily predicated by the 'tower' building typology, the governing concept for this piece was a celebration of flight. More specifically a celebration of the natural laws, forces, and phenomenon that set the stage for man's natural disposition against flight as well as his ability to fly (given the understanding and subsequent harnessing of said forces)."





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1 Martini Bar

Lauren Brabson
Interior Design, Junior

"These were perspectives drawn of a Martini Bar designed for a class project. They are just examples of what the interior would be like."

2 Projection Wall Office Conference Room

Lauren Brabson
Interior Design, Junior

"This perspective is from a class project where I chose to make the artwork carry through the ceiling with suspended pieces and on the floor with the carpet."

**3 The Blue Trumpet, Restaurant and Jazz Bar:
Bar Perspective**

Dana Amos
Interior Design, Junior

"This is part of a series of interior drawings from a restaurant and jazz bar that I designed to incorporate a contemporary version of New Orleans design and architecture. The structure incorporates rich colors, gestural jazz art, wrought iron and brass fixtures, as well as contemporary furnishings and innovative finishes."

**4 The Blue Trumpet, Restaurant and Jazz Bar:
Main Dining Room Perspective**

Dana Amos
Interior Design, Junior

**5 The Blue Trumpet, Restaurant and Jazz Bar:
Foyer/Waiting Area Perspective**

Dana Amos
Interior Design, Junior

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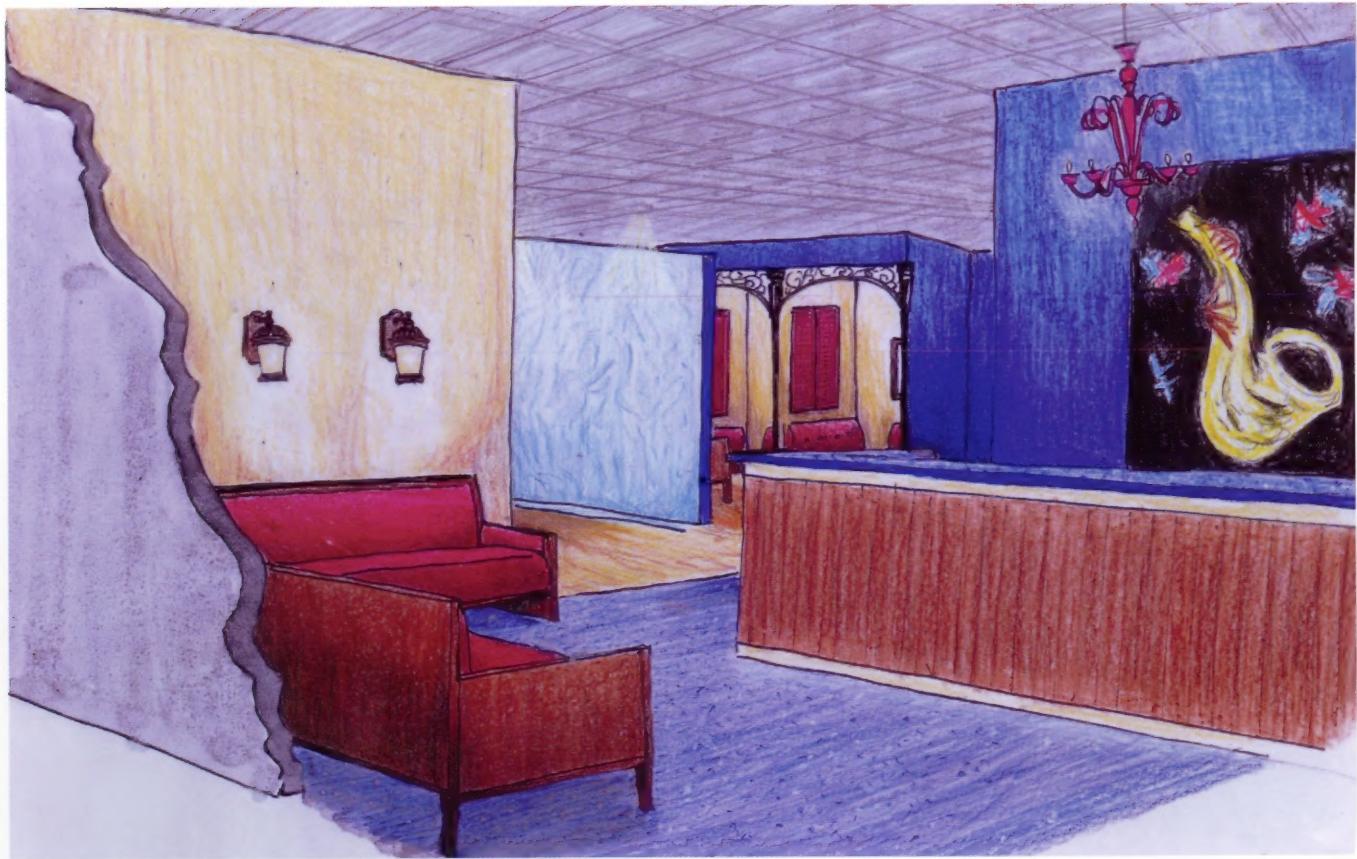
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1 The Lemon Drop Martini Bar

Amy Lewis

Interior Design, Junior

"This is an exterior perspective of the martini bar I created in my non-residential studio. I wanted the outside to reflect the inside using neutral colors and modern design."

2 The Lemon Drop

Amy Lewis

Interior Design, Junior

"This is an interior perspective of the above martini bar. This perspective shows the artwork I used to inspire me from the beginning of the project. I based everything around this piece of work."

3 The Fresh Cafe

Amy Lewis

Interior Design, Junior

"This is a perspective of the cafe we were required to create in my lighting class. I wanted the cafe to feel fresh and inviting."

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Board of Student Communications

Digital Resource Lab

English Department

Journalism Department

Architecture Department

Department of Consumer Affairs

Interior Design Department

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Microsoft Word Document (.DOC) file

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